

Studies for the
Adult Bible Class

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STUDIES FOR THE
ADULT BIBLE CLASS

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STUDIES FOR THE ADULT BIBLE CLASS

EIGHTY-SIX LESSONS

BY

NATHAN G. MOORE



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NATHAN G. MOORE
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DEDICATION

A GOOD many persons, of adult age, differing in some respects but much alike in others, having many anxieties and many fears and many doubts, have listened to the author as he sought, face to face, to point out to them where and how to find comfort and guidance and hope. Because those messages were oral they may, in the whirl of the world's activities, fade away and become of only fleeting value, an opportunity to refresh those impressions may tend to make them lasting, and in that hope they, or a few of them, are here presented in print.

To those friends the author, as his period of personal teaching is closing, dedicates these reminders of those years of happy companionship, hoping that upon some at least there may be shed as they read a profound and permanent peace.

N. G. MOORE.

January 1, 1929.

PREFACE

PROBABLY every earnest Bible class teacher is conscious of two outstanding desires,—*first* to be interesting, and *second* to be helpful. Many assume that the Old Testament is dull and dry, and limit their teaching largely to the new, but the present writer, in many years of teaching, has become more and more convinced that the old, as well as the new, contains ample elements to meet both requirements, though they do not always lie on the surface. Accordingly, as will be seen, he has made almost equivalent use of both.

THE METHOD OF TREATMENT

It used to be supposed that subjects of serious consequence must be dealt with only in serious, if not solemn, terms and tones. There is, it is true, a danger in frivolity, but experience shows, at least in these times, that attention and interest can be more easily attracted and more firmly held by a concrete application or a pertinent illustration than by mere didactics. If a truth is grasped and apprehended it cannot, I think, matter which of our varied sensibilities lays hold of it. The funny bone, the wish bone, and the backbone are found in the organism of every human being, and they are not far apart. The first may represent in this connection the physical sensations lying close to the surface; the second the desires of the spirit, its longings and aspirations; the third may stand for that most marked of mysterious human faculties,—the will; all these are often touched and moved by the narrative portions of scripture, as

well as by its promises and appeals, but they need to be “rightly divided,”—i. e., selected, polished, adorned, compared and applied. I have found this to be most effectually done by a review of the general subject, which I have called “background,” followed by an analysis in some such form as in the examples here attached, all of which and many more I have used in my own teaching. If in any respect or to any extent they are helpful to other teachers or other classes I will be amply rewarded.

THE BIBLE AS HERE USED AND ITS INTERPRETATION

I have not attempted nor even opened the way for the use of anything in class teaching less, and not much other, than the scripture as we now have it, for two reasons: *first* because in my opinion nothing has yet been proven which weakens its authority, or does more than shed new light on its true meaning; and *second* I find its simple statements more credible and easier understood than many of the explanations or evasions suggested to make acceptance easier. I believe, however, that its meaning and application may be illustrated from a hundred sources, secular as well as sacred, and this I have endeavored to do.

THE FIELD OF INQUIRY

I have no fear that any damage will be done by full inquiry, both into the word and the world, if only it be not frivolous or hypercritical; nor am I solicitous that the searcher shall always reach my own conclusions; but it is my conviction that ultimately the discovered truths will be found, as I think thus far they have been found, to confirm the veracity of our scriptures, in narrative as

well as in didactics, though curing, as I hope and expect, some of our errors of interpretation or construction.

THE USE OF THE BIBLICAL THEME

To me it seems simpler and more natural and therefore more convincing to treat all scripture as having a definite purpose, and of course an intelligible meaning; and to be therefore capable of construction when in any respect vague or doubtful, to determine its meaning. Whether it be poetry or parable or narrative or plain discourse, certain rules of construction have been found in human experience dependable, if not infallible, guides in construction. The main purpose of these is to reach and grasp the writer's *intent*. No one is excusable, I think, who fails, in a matter of serious import, to use his utmost faculties to determine that intent. I deem this my own privilege and duty, but where results may differ I know I have no right to deem my conclusions infallible. Yet I trust them myself, and use them in my teaching. Some who reach different conclusions may not feel at home in my interpretations of scripture. I can only invite such to consider mine as seriously intended but admittedly open to correction.

REASONING OR ARGUMENTATION

I have in these lessons carefully avoided theological discussion, or subjects inviting it. I deem these inappropriate for bible class work. It will be observed that I have not attempted a critical or verbal analysis of the bible text, nor to follow any defined course of study, or order of time, but have dealt in an independent order, admitting of skipping and selection here and there, and with broad topics in which people generally are inter-

ested; and I have endeavored to exhibit, to illustrate, and to illuminate the general teaching of scripture on each subject. I have avoided, as much as possible, in my own teaching and in these suggestive analyses, anything tending to rambling discussion, which leads into side issues, and is generally inconclusive. Yet mere assertion is not satisfying to the minds of alert members of a bible class. There are I am sure few persons if any who are converted to christianity as a personal dependence by mere argument, however logical or convincing. This is because in true personal religion the affections and emotions are also involved; but a thoughtful person wishes to be assured that the results presented for his acceptance are defensible by just reasoning, and that they can and will satisfy his intellect as well. I have therefore endeavored in these lessons to confirm by conviction all that seems to me rightly acceptable to the sensibilities.

CONTROVERTED CONSTRUCTION

It is not improper probably to say here, with reference to the theory of evolution so widely taught, at least as applied to mankind, that I have been using the greater part of my leisure time for several years in investigating that question, and have read and considered carefully everything I deemed instructive coming from its proponents, and I have reached the conclusion for myself that it is not only not proved but also that it is in conflict with the very facts cited to sustain it. In my opinion it has no adequate basis, and is no more than an iridescent dream. In the preparation of these lessons I have of course used, where nothing else would serve, my own views of that and other controverted subjects, but wherever the question involved is one of judgment,

on which christians may differ, I have refrained from partisan assertions; and where I could do so I have so framed the lessons that both comments and conclusions might be true and sound in both aspects.

THE SPIRITUAL AIM

The hopes and fears of mankind, as well as its present joys and cares, are not bounded by the survival of the body. Whether we will it or not they reach far out into scenes and conditions to which the mind can find no limit, and which we christians believe are eternal. Therefore even for our present earthly needs we long for some apprehension of those timeless things which only God can fully know. So it is, I think, a function and part of the essence of the daily bread for which we pray to feed the soul, which lives on ethereal and intangible food, as well as the body, which demands bread today, and again tomorrow. I deem this a phase of the bible message, and think the teacher may, if he will, open it up not only for the present consolation of busy men and women, but to incline them also to hope and to aspire. They should find in it power, and also a measure of peace.

SUMMARY

With these preliminary explanations I submit my Lesson Backgrounds and Analyses as an earnest effort to use bible material to truly instruct and also to inspire.

I have thought it wise to begin with a group of lessons intended as a survey,—as it were a graphic chart,—of the origin, falling away and final recovery of our race, as pictured in the bible.

This may well be followed, I think, with a few lessons on the geographic setting of the main events, so as to

tie up together in imagination the place and the story, to make a double impression. It has always seemed to me that the simple and natural surroundings of Socrates and his pupils and Jesus and his disciples magnified and deepened greatly the spiritual as well as the mental effect of the teaching.

This leads up to a study of the outstanding personages of bible history, old and new, and the lessons of their lives; and also to a group of lessons on some of the teachings of Jesus, and events in his life, less generally studied, with illustrations of their meaning and application.

With these I include some topics of a general character on which I think queries arise in the reflections of thoughtful people, though not sharply presented or separately taught in the scriptures. These are selections from many of my own dreams, flights of fancy, queries, etc., of no great importance separately considered, but believed to help in creating an atmosphere in which a great part of the time the reflective spirit finds itself afloat. Often these are traceable to, or connected with, teachings of the bible so pertinent and satisfying that these excursions and expansions may well be taken into account also in dealing with the things of God and home and heaven.

These papers, as they here appear, are expanded and revised from lessons as they were given. They were not then written, but outlines for my own guidance in preparation were preserved. This is stated lest it might be erroneously inferred that my teaching was in the form of written lectures. This, I think, is sometimes done, but it seems to me lessons are more effective if they come in form and language deemed appropriate at the time to carry a warm and earnest message to a class of adults needing and seeking help and guidance.

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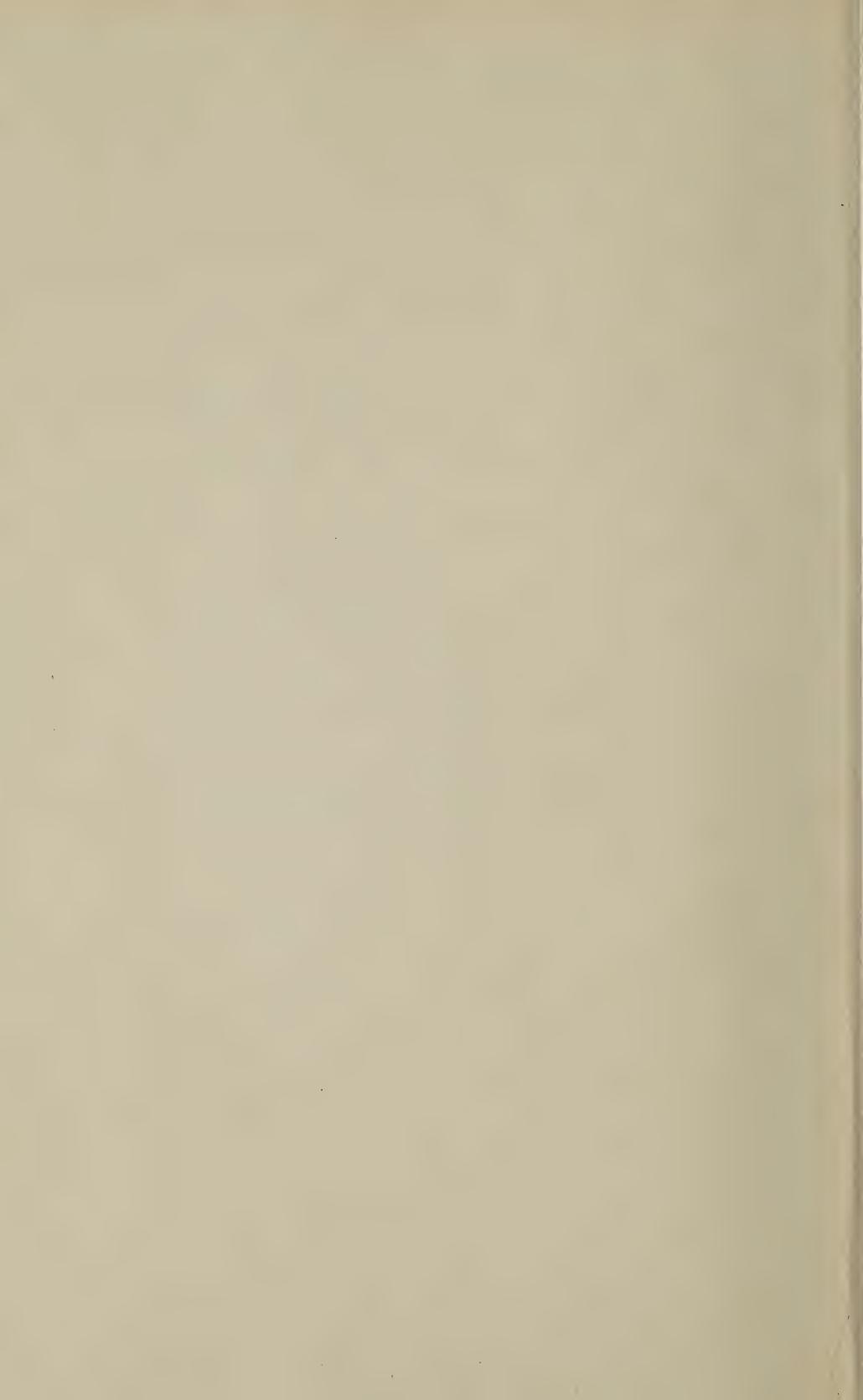
The Old Testament

GROUP A

IN THE nature of a graphic chart, from the Dawn of History to and through the Downward Drift of Mankind, to and through the Turn Upward as far as the Delectable Hills; and thence the vision of the way upward to Paradise.

LESSON

- I. THE DAWN OF THE WORLD
- II. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PHYSICAL WORLD
- III. GOD'S VISION OF MAN
- IV. THE ARRIVAL OF MAN
- V. HAPPY WHILE OBEDIENT
- VI. THE DOWNWARD TREND
- VII. THE TURN UPWARD, AND THE SLOW RECOVERY
- VIII. THE NEW PARADISE



LESSON I

THE DAWN OF THE WORLD

Read early passages from the book of Genesis

BACKGROUND:

THIS title may appear pretentious, somewhat like that of a certain great poem of the not very recent past, which the author called "Yesterday, Today and Forever." But the present title at least is not subject to criticism, I think, as being too vague or general, for it correctly describes the boundaries of the very subject to be considered, and this I deem the best criterion of fitness. The question of the origin of the human race and its habitat is vital to my theme. Nor do I claim, in dealing with it, to have knowledge on the subject not open to others. My purpose only is to state my inferences and conclusions as to the facts, drawn from the common supply. The origin of humanity seems to suggest the present dispute as to its cause. This I will consider briefly in another lesson, but not now. I am thinking at present only of the fact of its origin,—not its method. That subject is likely to be viewed differently, but on the present point I have prepared my analysis, as well as I can, so as to be both instructive and biblical, but not controversial. Strange to say, this topic lends itself to that treatment. I come then to a matter of common observation.

The saddest thing in all history, from a secular as well as a religious standpoint, is the downward tendency of humanity. While some deny it, as an abstraction, every-

one can see it and recognize it in those about him, and knows it to be true in his own experience. Aside from its religious aspect in leading men away from God, to which all history testifies, it affects family and social life adversely, obstructs the happiness and contentment of individuals, and increases a selfish, instead of a kindly and considerate attitude. What is generally known as civilization is in experience almost wholly external, though it is and ought to be encouraged and promoted by a right spirit. The means and implements to make life enjoyable and contented are abundant, and daily becoming more so, but happiness itself is as remote as ever. The christian has a definite explanation for this, and a sufficient reason for hoping that in the future a different condition will prevail. No other explanation and no other tenable hope is, I think, even visible. It is important, then, not alone for the christian, but for the whole world, that the grounds of this hope and the facts on which it rests should be clearly and frequently stated. The adult bible class is a proper place for this. Thus the swing downward and the turn upward are here presented,—inadequately, the writer knows,—but not, as he is sure, in a supercilious, much less a contentious, spirit.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. God was always.
2. Whether under the theory of evolution or of direct creation there was a time when everything created began.
3. The created world is classified as organic and inorganic.
4. Both have their origin somewhere.
5. Above the inorganic is the organic, and above that is the animal, and above all is the sentient.
6. From the lowest (inorganic) upward everything has uses.

7. The lower organic (plant life) consumes (uses) the inorganic (mineral); the animal, higher in the scale, uses both.
8. The sentient uses (consumes—lives by) all of them.
9. It can hardly be accidental that this is so.
10. There must therefore have been some wise and far-sighted originator.
11. If creation was wise and far-sighted the creator must have had a plan and purpose in advance.
12. So, reasoning from things which are, and their nature, backward, we find,—before any of them existed,—God.
13. And God must have been then as great and as wise as he is now, with all his attributes.
14. A satisfactory definition of God is found in the Westminster Cathechism: “God is a spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.”
15. So, as we cannot conceive such a God coming first into being, we call him “eternal”—without beginning or end.
16. And he was not, even at the beginning, *alone*. This we could only know from revelation.
17. But it harmonizes with what we would expect.
18. The first word we have on this subject is the biblical mention of the “Spirit,” which moved upon the face of the waters; and this suggests an individual in action.
19. Jesus said of himself that he was there: “Glorify me with the glory I had with thee before the world was.”
20. John said of him, “Without him was not anything made that was made.”
21. And that the Godhead consisted of more than one personality is indicated when God said, to someone capable of hearing and apprehending, and not merely by way of personal reflection, “Let us make man in our image.”
22. And Satan also existed. Jesus said: “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.”
23. And there was heaven also.
24. And there were angels. David sang, “Thou madest him, (man), a little lower than the angels.”

LESSON II

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PHYSICAL WORLD

Read Genesis 1:2-8, Job 37, Psalm 147

BACKGROUND:

WHETHER the physical earth developed slowly, partly out of inorganic substances, crowded into new positions by the pressure of tempests or intense heat, and partly out of organic matter endowed with life and the power of reproduction, or was created in one complete masterpiece, is not, I suppose, a theological question. As we are here treating the story of creation as found in Genesis as true when properly construed, we need not search for anything to contradict it, but it is evident that the story is there greatly condensed, and that it was transcribed very long after creation was concluded. It is agreed that there was a definite order in the rise of the physical world. At first, according to the scripture,—and this is not in conflict with any known facts,—it was chaos, which means a confusion of elements, and its development and separation into distinct and distinguishable elements began, says Genesis, with motion. This is scientifically sound, on any theory of its origin. But as to the period required for the process we are not told. It was probably long, as we would compute it. But time is nothing to an eternal God, and events which followed each other might have had a greater or less *hiatus* between their stages without conflicting with anything in the Genesis narrative. If we say that God created the canyon of the Yellowstone, it need

not be understood as an assertion that the time the river was wearing away its deep bed was short or long; and if we say that God created the mountains and the valleys, knowing that in recorded history the hills were pushed up by pressure from below, as they have often been since, —and the valleys were built up with *detritus* washed down from the hills, it is no denial of the sacred narrative to suppose that the earth's surface, as it eventually became, was shaped slowly and not swiftly. It is therefore proper, on either theory, to describe it as developing gradually out of original chaos, and this is consistent with the bible narrative. It is plain however that, as inorganic matter never had any power of automatic movement, the original earth materials were created, and did not grow.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. Note the scientific importance of the subject:
 - a. The heavenly bodies and their origin.
(the nebular or some other tenable hypothesis.)
 - b. The earth, and how it came to be. (Life and growth.)
 - c. Fundamental laws. (Gravity, centripetal and centrifugal forces, and their balance.)
2. Its theological importance.
 - a. Does Revelation explain it?
 - b. Can it be explained without assuming a designer and creator? (La Place: his computation of the fractional chance that the planets would, by accident, move in the same plane.)
 - c. Does it suggest or indicate the moral attributes of the designer? Definition of God in cathechism.)
3. Its original condition, as described in Genesis—"Without form and void, and darkness on the face of the deep."
4. Compare its present condition.
5. How did that development begin?
6. "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."
(Gen. 1:2.)

7. Correspondence with the scientific fact that *motion* produces light and heat; and motion was *first*.
8. That motion has never ceased. The seasons all depend upon it.
9. The bible story of creation was necessarily written long after it occurred.
10. But it was *inspired*, while the scientific theory arises much later, and is *inferred*.

NOTE.—They agree remarkably, but there is no *uniform* opinion among scientists. Many believe the order in Genesis correct. Those who differ do not agree among themselves. They differ considerably about data, and draw different conclusions from like data.

Their facts are inferred from other facts, and are chiefly conclusions.

Therefore, there is no clear conflict between revelation as such and science as such.

If there *were*, the Genesis order is as probable as the other, and behind it is the christian's belief in *inspiration*.

11. Until the earth was complete there was no human life.
12. But plant life and animal life existed before men. Where did life originate?
13. The coming of plant life, much of it bearing its seed in itself; and trees, producing fruit *containing* its own extension into the future. Marvel of marvels!
14. Could this be accident, or chance? If law, where did the law originate?
15. The succession of events and appearance of new forms, and life, in lower and higher forms.
16. The *probabilities* of this occurring without God are too remote to be believable.
(Note: See LaPlace's argument for the *nebular hypothesis*—the minute fractional *chance* that 144 planets would move in the same direction, and in the same plane.)
17. How much more unlikely that *by chance* plants would carry their own seed.
18. The infinite complexity of *animal life*, whether so created at first or developed since, increases our wonder.
19. And also convinces us of the *futility* of a theory which leaves God out.

LESSON III

GOD'S VISION OF MAN

Read Job 38:3-19, 1 Corinthians 15

BACKGROUND:

LONG before man appeared on the earth it is evident that God planned him and planned for him; he said "Let us make man in our image." This I suppose to be before the world itself was formed. I cannot suppose that God made or provided the world or the things that were in it for themselves alone; nor even for the animals, who never had the mentality to recognize and apprehend them. They were fitted and suited for the needs of man when he arrived, and this adaptation could not, I suppose, have occurred by accident, nor even for its own sake. Why were the fruits and flowers, the nuts and vegetables, the springs and rivers, made? Was no appreciative eye ever to fall upon them, or no occasion ever to arise for the intelligent use of their nourishing and strengthening qualities? Why was the soil made so fertile and so responsive if no hand was to till it, and if only indifferent animals were to browse there, and if no recurring human need were to be met by its recurring supply? No, if we assume that they did not occur by accident, the world and its blooming trees and shrubs, its waving grains, its sturdy forests, its many waters, were made first, so that when man, in the course of creation or development, should arrive he would find his earthly home ready and furnished for his needs. Without speculating therefore or guessing, we know, by the simple tests of reason, that God had a long vision of

man, and packed his trunk, as it were, beforehand, with the things needful both for his body and his soul, and man has ever since been making new discoveries of the wonderful things stored there; yet much still remains unknown. It cannot be doubted that the very first complete man could have had, if he had known how, the telegraph, the telephone, the radio. No new physical laws are now *invented*. They are *discovered*. Only the mode of use is dawning on humanity. Electricity and its wondrous capacities are not new, but no animal ever found or used them. Man alone has done so, in any degree. If it was an accident or a coincidence that they were in the world concurrently it is greatly to be wondered at. If it were not so it might have occurred that the human man had come and gone before these laws began their course.

The theory that God made them both, and fitted them for each other is simpler and easier grasped, and also more satisfying than any of the devices of men who leave God out.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. Man, at his best, is imperfect.
2. He is not always even lovable.
3. Perhaps he was not perfect before the fall.
4. God must have known he would be imperfect.
5. His earthly life had its limitations even then.
6. Even if his life was long it would have its limit.
7. In every generation he would have a long, slow youth, commencing with a child's faculties.
8. At the latter part of life he would have a long, slow period of decline.
9. Why, then, did God make him?

10. To answer this, remember what man is, in his completeness:
 - a. His life on earth is but a small part of the total.
 - b. His *spirit*, which is his most valuable part, is eternal.
 - c. He has immeasurable power of enlargement.
 - d. Though he can never become infinite, like God, yet he will never cease growing.
 - e. As his power to appreciate perfection grows, so should his worship of a perfect God.
 - f. Because of his earthly experiences, tenderness, sympathy and pity should soften and warm his heart.
 - g. Though made "a little lower than the angels," he is to be "crowned with glory and honor."
11. God could look forward to a long succession of men living on the earth, and an increasing multitude advancing into glory.
12. Is not man, for all these reasons, attractive even to God, in spite of his shortcomings?
13. God gives man on earth many joys, but the best of them are the joys of the spirit, which are fittest to be immortal.
14. He fits man into conditions which train, if he will, all his faculties to their highest capacity.
15. Man gets opportunities for training his powers such as angels never had.
16. And God equips him so that his highest faculties may develop the best, as the hardest steel can take the sharpest edge.
17. And so that the more he glorifies God the more he will gratify his own trained sensibilities, and *vice versa*.
18. And then God invites him to share the glory of heaven, and to live in it in peace forever.
19. Subject to death, he longs for enduring life.
20. Having struggles and fears, he desires perennial peace.
21. None of the pictures of the Good Book has ever appealed to men like the last two chapters of Revelation.
22. And the promise through Paul in I Cor. 2:9, that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart conceived what things God hath prepared for those that love him.

23. Struggling souls have conquered by that hope, martyrs have died for it, and we are sure that multitudes are now living in its fulfillment.
24. We sing of it, "On Jordan's stormy banks I stand, and cast a wishful eye toward Canaan's fair and happy land, where my possessions lie."
And of its continuity we sing:
"Part of the host have crossed the flood, and part are crossing now."
25. One of the greatest thrills Christian gets in Pilgrim's Progress is his view from the Delectable Hills of the shining towers and minarets of the Celestial City.
26. One of the great songs of the church, which christians sing with their eyes closed, is "Jerusalem, the Golden."
27. So, realizing that God knew from the beginning the good things man was to be trained for, and to come into if he will, we have no trouble in answering the question why God made man.

LESSON IV

THE ARRIVAL OF MAN

Read Genesis 1:26-31

BACKGROUND:

If God's plan had failed or been abandoned before man came the world would, in spite of its elements of beauty, have been a wilderness. America before the arrival of the pilgrims is an analogy. So was Africa in the days of Livingstone. Such also, in a manner, was the land of Israel after the inhabitants were carried away. Wild and dangerous beasts prowled everywhere, (2 Kings, 17:25). When man,—made or developed as God intended,—came on the scene very soon it was otherwise. He was the superior, the manager, the restrainer, the utilizer. For him it existed. The wild animals were restrained and constrained. Some of them were put to use,—the horse, the cow, the goat, the ox, the reindeer, and many others. The wild growth was limited and utilized, and much of it came under tribute,—some for service, some for beauty. That which had been merely cumbersome became useful; that which was prepared for the newcomer and met his needs was applied to its adequate purpose. Its beauties were magnified and multiplied when man,—the crown of creation,—made in God's image, arrived and found it ready; and behold, it was very good.

LESSON ANALYSIS

- As to Genesis I do not undertake to expound it; I will not argue here on controversial questions; but I assume that it is

inspired, written or rewritten or compiled by Moses, and true, when correctly understood.

2. There are in Genesis two distinct stories of the creation of man.
3. One is in detail; the other in broad terms, much like the story of the origin of the animals, which be it observed, are not said to be directly created in their present form, but by command, directed to the earth and the water.
4. It seems possible that both narratives were not originally written by the same hand, or from the same point of view.
5. In the second it is said that man was made "of the dust of the earth."
6. In both it is taught that man was given a second personality—"He became a living soul"; "God created man in his own image."
7. It is true, as we know, that after death, the human body returns to the elements of the earth; but the spirit cannot be thus traced.
8. Thus man—unlike the animals—had—at least from the time that the *soul* was breathed into him—*two natures*,—the body, which was made of dust, and the spirit, which was like God.
9. This is scientifically correct, and needs no proof.
10. It is followed out everywhere in scripture—"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."
11. We cannot doubt man's dual nature,—the spirit, with qualities which are fitted for immortality; and the body, which is not.
12. How and when did this departure from the previous creation begin?
13. Evolution offers an explanation of the *growth* of the body, but none of the spirit.
14. It does not explain the *origin* even of the physical body, nor of life.
15. God only—by direct action—could create the *spirit*, and science has not a word to the contrary.
16. It is the Spirit which thinks, decides, wills, and obeys or disobeys its Maker.

17. God has no physical body. Therefore it is the *spirit* of which Genesis speaks when it says man was "made in God's image."
18. If we ever thought it was the *body* we misinterpreted scripture, which does not say so.
19. We may have misunderstood also the *time* it took God to create even the body. A rapid or a slow process are both consistent with Genesis.
20. The Bible therefore is a history of the development of the human *spirit*,—and the body is incidental.
21. It is of the spirit the scripture speaks when it says that he (man) was made a little lower than the angels, but is to be crowned with glory and honor.
22. Even by the theory of evolution it is plain that when man's *body* reached a fit stage God took it and filled it with a spirit like his own.
23. At that point begins the story of man's fall, which the bible everywhere assumes.
24. Without that world truth there would be no sin, and of course no Savior and no atonement.
25. The coming of Jesus would have no cause, and could be of no avail.
26. Evolution assumes a constant or generally constant *advance*, and if it could relate to man's *spirit* would conflict with bible revelation.
27. Limited to man's physical body, it is not impossible, nor necessarily in conflict with Scripture, though its verity is in grave doubt.
28. When God created man's *spirit*, however, even his *body* became sacred, of the same order as that of Jesus.
29. Though that body must return to dust, it is to be renewed and perfected and made immortal at the resurrection.
30. So on earth both body and spirit are under God's care, and God is man's guide, in life and in death.

LESSON V

HAPPY WHILE OBEDIENT

Read Deuteronomy 28:1-12

BACKGROUND:

A MAN is rarely conscious of his bodily sensations while he is in health. Comfort and physical contentment are normal, and attract no attention. Sickness, pain,—broken bones, a twisted ankle,—and how changed. Some people think of that normal state as constituting happiness; but happiness, as meant by our topic, is *conscious* contentment, and this may be enjoyed even with a weak and broken body. It is manifestly an inward state. When confidence and trust take the place of fear or apprehension; when grief and sadness are replaced by a confident hope; when one has done another a wilful injury and supposes he has lost a friend, but a status of peace and affection has been restored;—these and many others like them illustrate the blissful state we call happiness. Disobedience to God is abnormal, for obedience is the only path to peace. So with man in his first estate. The law of God was not arbitrary, but was like the sign posts in an unfamiliar way,—showing which is the true road to peace. Why should disobedience appear attractive when one trusts his guide; and why should one even hope to attain peace while consciously travelling the other way. In the case of our first parents, as with us, it was a perverted will, yielding to Satan, which led them astray; and only repentance could bring back the ecstasy of peace.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. God first provided for man the most perfect surroundings.
2. And then made or remade him with power to use and enjoy them.
3. As to the physical paradise described in Scripture, it was perfect.
 - a. It was nature at its best and most beautiful.
 - b. It was paradise—a garden—filled with beauty for the eye, and satisfying to every desire.
 - c. Many spots of earth are desirable, but in some places are gathered earth's richest and best and most beautiful.
 - d. Some are entrancing beyond comparison, and such was paradise.
 - e. Eden, as we read of it, was the very climax of beauty, in landscape and waterfall.
 - f. Poets have always sung of it, and artists have sought to picture it.
 - g. We have made it the symbol of the beauties of the world to come.
 - h. Its native products were adapted to every human need.
 - i. It amply responded to every effort.
 - j. It was fitted not only to gratify but to educate and train.
 - k. It was filled with life—animals, birds and fishes.
4. And to this paradise God introduced man.
5. If man was then only so far advanced in physical life as can be explained by evolution, he probably got no more pleasure from it than any other animal.
6. For science pauses when it reaches the point where man was endowed with a spirit like God's.
7. Somehow, even if man was brought to that point by development, there descended on him a higher personality, which no one can deny or explain.
8. At that point, if he had a previous animal existence, man's senses became sensibilities, and to him Eden and its beauties became new.

9. If he were an animal or animal-like before God gave him his second nature, the beauties of paradise would make no impression on him.
10. But what a change when God made him over, and gave him an apprehension like his own.
11. Then for the first time his ears were opened, and he could hear music,—the song of birds, the ripple of water, the whisper of the wind.
12. For the first time his eyes were opened, and he could see beauty,—the blue of the sky, the green of the grass, the coloring of flowers.
13. For the first time his mind was opened, and he could think and speak, and shout and sing.
14. For the first time the faculties of his soul were opened, and he could know God, and apprehend something of his greatness.
15. Can you imagine anything finer or sweeter, or more entrancing to every sense?
16. Was not this in every essential a new creation?
17. What a God, who could take a mere animal and endow him like that.
18. Can you imagine any condition fitter to weep over when lost, or to rejoice over when found again?
19. Such then was the state in which God made—or remade—man, and such a home he had prepared for him.
20. Oh, Paradise! Oh, Paradise! So we sing of it yet—with sadness for having lost it, and hopes to win it back.

LESSON VI

THE DOWNWARD TREND

Read Job 14

BACKGROUND:

THIS topic assumes that mankind either was, at its origin, or came to be, a highly developed personality,—complete in every human characteristic,—body, mind and spirit, and that in his more perfect state he was close to God; also that by some means he lost his grip on the higher life, and started on a course of deterioration. Such is the plain teaching of the bible, and also of common observation. We are left in no doubt that there was an adequate cause, and it is clearly stated what that cause was. In these lessons we are not regarding this as debatable, but treat it as authoritative. It harmonizes with what we see, and commends itself to our judgment. We are aware that the theory of human evolution has been taking a strong hold of late, even of many christians, who think they can see in it a sufficient measure of harmony with fundamental bible teaching. This is not the place to discuss its merits, but we cannot forget that under that theory, as usually stated, man was *not* created in a high estate, from which, by the persuasions of an evil being, he fell. Yet the whole bible, with its persuasions and warnings, and also its assurances of the ultimate coming of the Messiah, as well as the story of his coming, pursuant to those forecasts, seems to the writer capable of no other interpretation. There is, in the opinion of a few scientists, a phase of the theory of evolution which applies it only to the animal

body of man, which they think may have evolved slowly to a stage at which the power of God intervened and endowed that body with a soul, comprising the spiritual aspects we see in humanity, but this is not generally accepted by evolutionists. Much ingenuity has been used to make these evolutionary and biblical theories appear to harmonize, but to this writer they appear, as generally understood, to be in their essence quite different, and not capable of reconciliation without a construction of the biblical narrative having the effect to reduce it, not only in Genesis, but throughout, from a statement of fact, which it purports to be, to a mere allegory. Therefore the student of human moral and religious history, if he deems it desirable to inform himself closely, must choose between them.

Our lesson is on biblical lines, and it seems to the writer not only that the bible but also common observation and experience show that man's uncontrolled tendency is downward, and that history, secular as well as revealed, so indicates. If so nothing but divine intervention, correcting and reversing the direction of man's perverted will, can bring him back.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. When God gave man his spiritual nature he made him as high in every quality as man can reach.
2. But this was God's *direct* gift, and man himself contributed *nothing* to attain it.
3. It was like a birthday gift,—not earned nor attained, but only *received*.
4. At that time, and in that condition, man's *will* was not involved.
5. Therefore, although at that stage man *behaved* perfectly he was not *perfect*,—for he had one great quality *not used*.

6. He had then no power of *resistance*, because he had not been *tempted*.
7. He was *capable* of being tempted. Even angels had been tempted, and some had fallen.
8. Manifestly man would be more nearly perfect if he could be tempted and still overcome.
9. The greatest thing that was said of Jesus—in his humanity—is this: that “he was tempted, yet without sin.”
10. Does not this answer the frequent inquiry why God permitted Satan and sin?
11. If man were only *mechanically* good—i.e.—if he could not be tempted or yield, his worship would not glorify God nor even gratify himself, for it would not be of his own choice.
12. It was such a test which God permitted in the case of Job.
13. So God made man capable of sinning, but able to resist.
14. And man, conscious of his lack of wisdom, was tempted at his weakest point: Satan pointed out a mode of filling that conscious lack.
15. He grasped at it, though God had forbidden it. This was sin, and this was the *fall*, for before that he was innocent.
16. He thus became conscious of sin, and aware that he was no longer a fit companion of a perfect God.
17. No subsequent obedience, even if that were possible, could restore him to a consciousness of blamelessness.
18. This was the beginning of his downward road, and he drifted farther and farther from God, for he no longer desired God’s companionship.
19. He still *aspired*, and still *now* aspires,—but he is conscious of weakness, and can no longer hold up his head before God.
20. What can restore him?
21. Plainly it must be a power outside of himself.
22. This weakness inheres in his *humanity*, and this is what is meant by the sinful state of the race *since* the fall.
23. This is not, then, an artificial theory. No thoughtful person can escape it.
24. And this is what is meant by the “downward trend,” and this is essentially the Presbyterian doctrine of “original sin.”

LESSON VII

THE TURN UPWARD, AND THE SLOW RECOVERY

Read Hebrews I

BACKGROUND:

IF MAN has lost his first innocence, and if his warped tendency is farther and farther away from his high estate; and if, alone, he cannot, if he would, climb again up that slippery steep, then some power stronger than he, and concerned to restore him, must intervene. A greater power might compel him, but God had made him independent, and force would not change his heart. Thus the constraint to be used must deal with his sensibilities, and renew his will. Persuasion, and not compulsion, is God's method, and this is slow, for man is perverse, and Satan has not died. Evidence of the great desirability of companionship with God is presented and pressed upon him all through his history, until it can be safely said that he is convinced, amply and permanently. But his will is weak, and his heart has grown evil. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. So from the beginning God planned, in the fullness of time, to send to mingle with humanity the Prince of Heaven, having a human semblance but a divine spirit, conspicuously lovable, altogether sinless, convincing and persuasive above every other being; who, by his life and death and resurrection should not only make atonement for human sin, but draw men to him; and so by love as well as by reverence lead them to *repentance*, (which means reversal), and turn his steps again upwards, and supply both aspiration and hope.

THE TURN UPWARD, AND THE SLOW RECOVERY 23

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. The important thing is the turn upward,—the motion in the other direction,—not the speed, nor the rate of progress.
2. The turn is not accomplished by waiting, nor by drifting, but by the exercise of *will*.
3. This means purpose, deliberation, self-compulsion.
4. Behind it there must be a *motive*, strong enough to overcome inertia.
5. A few people find a helpful motive in a sense of duty,—but not many.
6. People are influenced much more by their sensibilities than by their judgment.
7. Henry Drummond said the “greatest thing in the world” is *love*.
8. But love of a mere *abstraction*, an *ideal*, or a *vision* is not powerful enough to correct a perverted *will*.
9. It must be love of a *person*; and the person must be both admirable and lovable.
10. The will is not easily forced. Indeed even its possessor cannot compel it, for will must precede force.
11. Perhaps logic will not answer whether in the same individual force precedes will, or will precedes force.
12. But if in testing this we ignore *divine* power, and its exercise from the outside, we will find ourselves reasoning in a circle.
13. God knew that. He also knew the weakness of humanity, and how hard it is to love a spirit.
14. So he sent into the world, to live among men, the most admirable and lovable of beings, with every quality to command both *respect* and *affection*.
15. But even so, the human will, weakened by long indulgence, requires more than a *motive*,—it must have also a divine *constraint*, which of course we must distinguish from compulsion.
16. A rebellious nature must somehow be radically *changed*.
17. So God sent his best—his son—the Prince of Heaven.
18. He had every perfection. For two thousand years his friends and his enemies have found him without a fault.

19. Here the downward trend began to turn upward; for he could not only inspire love, and thus create a motive, but he could also exercise the *divine constraint*.
20. And since then his followers and adorers have multiplied, and are still multiplying.
21. His coming was the central point of human history.
22. So the *circumstances* of his coming are significant.
23. He came as a Prince should come, preceded by the grandest chorus the earth ever heard.
24. Legions of angels were in his train, and for once the songs of heaven were heard in the language of men.
25. He was welcomed by men of humble and lofty rank.
26. His coming had been long predicted by men sent of God to prepare man for his arrival.
27. The circumstances of his coming correspond with these predictions.
28. The world was prepared for him, and for the spread of his good news,—in language, facilities for travel, and total weariness of substitutes for God.
29. He brought men the most needed gifts—peace, comfort and hope; not always peace *between* them, but peace *within* them; and always comfort, and always hope.
30. And so the slow recovery began, and with it the confident hope of a new paradise.

LESSON VIII

THE NEW PARADISE

Read Revelations 2:7, Revelations 22

BACKGROUND:

“**L**IFE is short, and time is fleeting,” sings the poet; and man is conscious that profound and permanent happiness after the body has been dropped and the soul only is concerned, can be had only where peace reigns, and where the longings of the heart can be satisfied. And man made in the image of God is aware that only those things which satisfy God can satisfy him. So the pictures of paradise which have been spread before him all his days,—its beauties, its charms, its companionships, its music, and its clear apprehension of the perfections of God,—at last draw and satisfy his heart, as they have long appealed to his mind; and so,—his fears and regrets, his conscious falls and failures, his growing remorse, all being forever past,—paradise has been regained. His heart is then at rest. Every outreach of his soul is satisfied, and nothing again can break the continuity of divine content. Even his dearest earthly companionships are restored; and with all his faculties utilized and expanded to their utmost capacity he is at last brought fully back to the high estate in which the life of his race began. Aye even more, for now he is higher even than the angels, as God had promised, and his last state is better than his first.

“Paradise Regained,” Milton called it. Perhaps this is better than “The New Paradise,” although it is evident that, to the vision of those who have “obtained the

promise,” i.e., who have witnessed the coming of the Messiah, for whom Abraham looked and longed,—there are additions to paradise, as we conceive it, unknown to Abraham. Yet within the meaning of Scripture it is the same. To the christians of Ephesus the Lord said, in his message in Rev. 2:7,—“To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of Life which is in the midst of the paradise of God.” This plainly refers to the tree mentioned in Genesis 3:22, of which man, as he then was, was unfit to partake, but which, after his long probation, his fall and his recovery, was now fit and appropriate for him. It also seems that in the mind of Jesus Christ it was the same paradise,—spiritualized, but reserved for the use of man when, after his sins and repentance, he should come back home, as the prodigal son came back; for Jesus said to the penitent thief,—“this day shall thou be with me in paradise.”

And so now,—with all the loveliness of God’s garden, equipped and fitted with “mansions” for all his people, it is being inhabited by the redeemed who as they leave the world are transported there, and never again go out.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. The “slow recovery” describes the upward progress of the *human race*, but the climax—the new paradise—must concern the individual.
2. Happily the way to it is not measured by distance or by time, nor even by effort. The test only is progress and *direction*.
3. Many an individual has spent but a short time on the way, but has safely arrived.
4. The face forward—the climb upward—the eager desire—the faith and hope, are enough.
5. What is that which we call sometimes Paradise, sometimes Heaven, sometimes Canaan, sometimes the New Jerusalem?

6. Is it a vision—an aspiration—an ideal—a longing—a state?
7. Or is it a *place*—where we will find friends, beauty, music, rest?
8. If we have no bible and no God we cannot answer these questions. They cannot be proved by experience, for no friend of ours has ever returned.
9. But we find it pictured and sung and promised in the Book.
10. And in the gospels we have the story of one, and only one, who went and returned, and went again.
11. His description of it is restrained and limited, but it is enough to show how eminently *desirable* it is.
12. Without the bible men have dreamed of and hoped for a future life, but found no word of what or where or how.
13. Futile books, like “The Gates Ajar,” have sought to picture it from a human point of view, and have only made the reader grieve.
14. From the bible we learn that it is a *place*; for Jesus said that in it were many abiding places.
15. There we shall find our departed friends—and know them—for
 - a. David said of his little boy—“I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.”
 - b. Jesus said we should sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and this implies that we shall recognize them.
 - c. Moses and Elijah knew each other, though they left this world centuries apart.
 - d. Jesus said to the dying thief, “This day shalt thou be *with me* in Paradise.”
 - e. Stephen, when dying, saw heaven opened, and Jesus there.
 - f. Paul, in his vision on the way to Damascus, saw Jesus and spoke with him.
16. It is the plain teaching of the bible everywhere that in heaven there is a conscious existence.
17. Since the spirit is immortal, and men are mortal, there must be constant arrivals there, and no departures.
18. If the power to remember, to love, to aspire, to serve, remains, there must be friendships—old and new,—acquaintanceships, affections, joys and occupations.

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19. If not, then existence there can be no more than Nirvana, or something else wholly without those joys of the spirit which were highest on earth.
20. The gospels do not so teach. Jesus said the thief should be *with him*. This could not be if he could not know him or love him.
21. He said the angels rejoiced over the repentance of one sinner. This could not be if the sinner could not himself rejoice.
22. So the promise of God is not “made to the ear and broken to the hope.”
23. So heaven cannot itself be *less* than earth, or more vague and unsatisfying than human life.
24. So the new paradise must be and is a *place*, adapted to our new form of existence, where there is rest and joy and companionship.
25. It is a place of meetings, of renewals, of happy memories, of eager service.
26. There can be there no pains, nor tears, nor separations, nor sorrows.
27. And such is the picture in the last two chapters of Revelation. The last book of the bible closes as the first began—“In the beginning God;” In the end God.

The Old Testament

GROUP B

THE PROMISED LAND, and its attainment; the earthly abode of God's people; type and anti-type. The books of their constitution and laws; also of their historical development and condition; comprising an impressionistic picture of the goodness, the patience and the faithfulness of God to a wilful people.

LESSON

- IX. PALESTINE: THE LAND OF PROMISE
- X. THE CONTENT AND INTENT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT
- XI. GENESIS: THE BOOK OF BEGINNINGS
- XII. EXODUS: THE GREAT MIGRATION
- XIII. LEVITICUS: THE STATUTE BOOK
- XIV. NUMBERS: WANDERING IN THE WILDERNESS
- XV. DEUTERONOMY: MOSES' FAREWELL ADDRESS
- XVI. JOSHUA: THE STORY OF CONQUEST
- XVII. JUDGES: A NARRATIVE OF SCATTERED EVENTS WITH A COMMON TIE
- XVIII. THE LAYMAN'S SIMPLE TESTS OF CREDIBILITY
- XIX. THE LAYMAN AND HIS BIBLE
- XX. THE LAYMAN'S LOGIC ABOUT GOD
- XXI. THE LAYMAN'S EVIDENCE OF GOD

LESSON IX

PALESTINE: THE LAND OF PROMISE

Read Deuteronomy 8

BACKGROUND:

WITH the mention of the name of Palestine those two great gifts of God to humanity,—memory and imagination,—spring into action, and the long caravan of Abraham is vividly seen as it winds and circles slowly around the deserts, and into “God’s country,” much as the American pioneers so many centuries later wound across the “Great American Desert,” to found new homes in the far west. Abraham was called of God, and only knew where and for what when, as an alien, he wandered over the land then occupied by others, and was assured that it should be the home of a great race of which he should be the founder.

“Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward and eastward and westward. For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever.”

And in that land, looking back, we see the working out of that promise. Oh, it was slow,—very slow,—from man’s point of view; but time cuts no figure with God, to whom a thousand years are but as one day. Palestine was not even then virgin soil, but was occupied by a people who,—kind and respectful as they were to Abraham,—did not know God. They were not to be dispossessed without a chance. They were to have four hundred years to learn of him and turn to him. “The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full,” said God.

Meanwhile they were, for a sufficient time, to observe Abraham and his descendants, and learn of Jehovah's greatness and goodness by the blessings he showered on his worshippers.

As we travel today northward toward Galilee from Jerusalem we come to Shechem, where Abraham built his first altar of worship in the new land. And there now are Jacob's well, and Joseph's tomb, and the Mounts of Blessing and Cursing. On the approach to it are the plains of Dothan, where Jacob's sons fed their cattle. And there, seeking his brothers, we can almost see the young Joseph stepping along among the tall grass, wearing his coat of many colors. And it seems almost as if we hear again Joseph's peasant brothers as they watch his approach say among themselves, "Behold this dreamer cometh."

And here also we can even now almost see the tribes of Israel gathering to hear the Farewell Address of the loyal Joshua,—now very old, and about to die,—and hear his voice as he proclaimed the truth of God, and vouched that not one word of his promises had failed. So, scattered over Palestine, are other spots of glowing memories which have not yet faded. We can see the descendants of Joseph, of sober mien, carrying back his bones on the return so long predicted, and burying them there, according to his request, after four hundred years of weary waiting in Egypt.

And in Jerusalem we stand on the very spot where Abraham brought Isaac for the apprehended sacrifice. There yet is that rock Moriah where Arnon had his threshing floor, which David bought as the site for an altar to God, and where Solomon built his magnificent temple. That rock, where the mosque of Omar now

stands, is also interesting because of the tradition prevalent among the Mohammedans that Mohammed stood on it when it is supposed he rose to Paradise, and is said to have pressed it back when it sought to follow him. They point out even now his footprint on its surface, and assert that it hangs upon nothing.

So also the City of Jericho falls into the picture, with the children of Israel encircling it, preceded by the priests blowing their trumpets. By the command of God it was never to be rebuilt, and it never was. Many such memories crowd on the observer even now, but the greatest impression is that this is the “land of promise.”

Palestine has become and is yet a type and vision to God’s people of the spiritual paradise to which they hope to come, and to which the only barrier is the river Jordan, typifying the “valley of the shadow of death.” We still sing:

“On Jordan’s stormy banks I stand
 And cast a wishful eye
To Canaan’s fair and happy land,
 Where my possessions lie.”

One of the most pathetic scenes in the life of Moses is his first and latest view of the beautiful land to which he had so long looked forward, but which it was not God’s will that he should enter.

Standing on the western shore of the Dead Sea, and looking across its glittering, oily waters, we see Mount Nebo, on whose summit, some three thousand years ago, stood perhaps the saddest man of Israel. He was old, but straight and strong and active. “His eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.” For forty years he had been the leader of the unruly hosts of Israel, and now that the time had come for fulfilling God’s promise to

Abraham, after four hundred years and more of waiting, he could not enter with them, but might view the land from this height, and must then surrender his life to God, and be borne by angels to his burial on the mountain side. What he saw from that viewpoint is well described in his own words:—“A good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of the valleys and hills.” So Mount Nebo is one of the sacred places in and about the land, and helps to make it holy. But God was good to Moses, although for his sins he had forfeited the right to enter the promised land at the head of his people. He was not only nobly buried, with ceremony and cortège never approached, but the Mohammedans have a beautiful tradition that when he was laid in the grave God himself stooped over and kissed him on the brow.

Another wondrous spectacle, much later, made another spot forever sacred. As the traveller stands beside the city of Bethlehem he looks over the fields where on the first Christmas “the shepherds kept their flocks by night.” Memory again recalls and imagination pictures the legions of angels sweeping down out of heaven with their finest choirs singing to celebrate the advent of the royal prince as he came “in the fullness of time” to humble himself for the sake of humanity, which, though created in the image of God, had fallen from its high estate. There is nothing artificial or merely visionary about this picture to those who accept the narrative of Christ’s coming as a divine revelation. To all such this place also has become holy ground. And so in Nazareth, and around the Sea of Galilee, and among the streets of Bethlehem, and up the worn footpath to Bethany, and to and into the Mount of Olives and the Garden of

Gethsemane one may trace with confidence the foot-steps of the Saviour, and identify fairly the home of the sisters Mary and Martha, and even the grave of Lazarus. And so at the old gates of Bethlehem, where Jesus was born, we may pause and recall,—as perhaps he often did,—the romantic story of the time of David, in the days and nights of adventure while, perforce, he was kept away from his home city; how he longed for a drink of water from the old well beside the gates of Bethlehem; and how some of his heroic friends ventured their lives to satisfy that desire, and breaking through the ranks of the Philistines carried to David a gourd of that water; and how David when he received it felt himself unworthy to drink it because it was won by the blood of his friends, but poured it out upon the ground as a libation of thankfulness to God. Do not these recollections fill those spots with living memories, so that the places and the stories seem wrapped together to make them both sacred?

And most of all we identify the places in the holy city which have become a part of our religion, with the events which we cannot forget. The temple area, the upper room, the judgment hall of Pilate, the “*Via Dolorosa*,” up which Jesus went, bearing his cross; the fourteen places now characterized by the Roman Catholic church as “stations,” where the events of that sad day occurred;—where Jesus paused and said to the sorrowful woman, “Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and your children”; where his strength failed, and his cross was transferred to the shoulders of a stranger; where a fierce man in the crowd accosted him; and most of all, where he was crucified, buried, rose again; and the spot on the hillside by Bethlehem from which he

ascended, to be seen no more. Is not this small country, crowded with these significant events, well designated the “Holy Land”? and while christianity holds its place in men’s hearts can it ever be less so?

PALESTINE AS HISTORIC GROUND

1. A certain king called for his wisest counsellor and said—“What is your strongest argument for the truth of the Old Testament?” “The Jews, your Majesty,”—he replied.
2. I should add—“and the Holy Land.”
3. For every spot is a memorial of features of Jewish history, and of history since that day, so well verified as to be, I think, beyond reasonable doubt.
4. There are radical Jews who purport to doubt the stories of their own history, but there are few who do not feel confident enough about it to defend it against the critics of their race.
5. None of these facts are more amply verified than the life and experience of our Lord; and so in travelling over it we, though aliens to that race, seem conscious of its sacred places as if we had seen the events of history take place.
6. And the events of later years are just as real. The destruction by Titus and the sacking of the temple, depicted on the Arch of Titus in the Forum at Rome, and reproduced on the Arch of Triumph at Paris.
7. The conquest by Mohammed, and the building of the mosque of Omar on the ancient rock of Moriah, where Abraham offered Isaac, is just as vivid.
8. The crusaders, and particularly the adventures of King Richard, depicted in Scott’s novel, “The Talisman,” are as fresh and lifelike.
9. And latest the capture of the Holy Land from the Turks in the recent world war by Allenby is the freshest link in that long chain of romantic events. It is attractively told in “The Romance of a New Crusade,” by one of his officers.
10. The country is so small that every event is easily located, and most of the places have attached the name of some special hero.

11. A trip through the Holy Land is at once a history, a romance, an experience and a dream, and it cannot be severed from its source in the bible. They belong together.
12. It is fortunate that during the greater part of the time since Christ it was always controlled by those who deemed it both historical and sacred,—though for different reasons.
13. Its most sacred places are preserved and protected by churches and mosques, though built since, and often on new lands.
14. Few places of ancient interest are so amply authenticated, though most of the other antiquities of the world have been permitted to go,—partially or wholly,—to decay.
15. And many,—still visible,—are not identified or fully apprehended.
16. So even yet the bible is the most reliable guide book to Palestine, and all sufficient.
17. And we can thank God that the new discoveries of antiquarians, from time to time, are in harmony with the narratives of the scriptures, and are constantly proving their correctness.
18. One who goes through Palestine with the Book in his hand, though he had read its stories as if they were tales of imagination, cannot help but find them more and more clearly reliable.
19. But one who begins the trip in faith and confidence will combine events names and places like one who goes back to the home of his childhood.
20. And he will not be able to distinguish between his imagination and his memory, for one will recall the picture and the other will paint it.
21. To a christian such an experience is heart warming, and greatly aids in making God and his guidance sensibly real.

LESSON X

THE CONTENT AND INTENT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Read Psalms 119:97-112

BACKGROUND:

ON ITS FACE the Old Testament purports to be a history of human experience; a description of God and his attributes and qualities; a picture of human weakness, but also of human response to the divine offer of leadership and upward lift; a chart of a practicable way through the cross-paths and bramble patches of a complex life; a long, long lesson in the joys of companionship with God, and in the sadness of separation; a revelation, sufficiently plain, of the practicable emergence of the human soul from the things and concerns of this life on earth to an endless state of bliss.

It is also a testimony, from many individuals, and out of many hearts, to the persistent patience of God, and the firmness of his hold, even against resistance, on all humanity, if not deliberately and perseveringly refusing his help. Many writers in succession take up the tale, over long ages, one taking up the pen where another laid it down. There are sermons, expositions and illuminations, by messengers purporting to serve as God's mouthpiece. There are hymns of praise, penitence and petition; but perhaps the most convincing are the stories of experience, each bearing its own moral, and all consistently showing divine invitation and gracious intervention.

If we were, as a bible class, attempting to convince the unconvinced, or to answer the atheist; if in short our work were evangelistic instead of cultural, it would be a part of our duty to explain the grounds on which the whole bible is deemed inspired of God and entitled to be accepted and obeyed as such; but for our present purpose we so assume, and essay only to comprehend it. We therefore begin by observing its composite character; its varied topics and modes of treatment, and the conditions under which its distinct parts appeared. Considering its nature it would not be helpful to treat its fragments of history as being didactic or the reverse. Therefore, the stories we sometimes read of individuals, seeking light from God, opening the book at random, and deeming the first passage the eye falls on as God's express message to the inquirer, must be apocryphal. It might easily be that the passage so hit upon is the language of an *enemy* of God; as for instance the words of the serpent to Eve, or the argument of Satan recorded in the book of Job; or, it may be an accusation, as the rebuke of Nathan, directed to David in his sin. Nor can every separated passage be deemed to have a spiritual significance, as the pedigrees in the Books of Chronicles. They may or they may not,—depending on their connection and intent. We are assuming here their veracity, and we may find in any of them lessons of God's dealings with the race of men; but we may also find in them proofs of the vagaries of humanity,—thinking and acting without God. It is evident therefore that to draw from them the true divine message one must compare scripture with scripture, and ascertain thus their true intent. Some of it is true poetry, not only in essence but in form, expressing the longings, hopes and aspirations

of godly men; and of course God, who guided the thoughts of men in framing them, meant us to gather from them warm and vital lessons; but those stories are not always merely historical, nor in their nature are they all didactic. Who is there who can apprehend the existence of the bible and its antiquity without seeing in it and behind it the hand of God? We who have found its divine authority proved to our hearts deem its variety no obstacle to faith, but find in that a new appreciation of its adaptation to the different characteristics and changing conditions of humanity; so that no human vagary, or even wilful sin, can fail to find in it invitation, warning, comfort, assurance or illumination. Strange that books or systems of any medical method of dealing with the ills of the human body should change so greatly in a thousand years, while God's treatment of the afflictions of the soul is always adequate. It is "the same yesterday, today and forever."

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. Do you not weary of the light frivolity with which serious themes are handled in many of the books of today? From the title down to the tailpiece, biographies and histories,—books of philosophy and of religion,—the condiments are more in evidence than the meat.
2. Do you not weary equally when it is announced that the most modern man in the University is going to make a new translation of the Bible? A man with no imagination and but a leathern soul wants to make the Psalms clearer.
3. Oh to be sure the Old Testament was not written in English, but among the translators of the King James version were spirits touched with fire, sensitive to poetry, skilled in the subtle meaning of words, and they produced a book full of thrills.

4. And often in your church service, when the scripture,—for instance the Twenty-third Psalm,—is to be read, and you prepare to follow along the well remembered words, as your mother taught you, the minister proceeds instead to read you some recent version, the author of which deems it illuminating to translate its thrilling stories backwards, or upside down.
5. This one may say is a matter of taste, and so it would be if you had not from childhood been taught to memorize scripture, and having done so, and having filled your mind and heart full of its solemn beauty, you come with regret to find that someone with a taste for analysis has broken up its petals, and lost you both the perfume and the rose.
6. Here we will study it in its familiar form. If anyone can throw light on its true and deep meaning we will welcome it, but the story shall be told as of old. It adds nothing to the noble phrases of the Twentieth Psalm to have them wrought over to conform to modern astronomy.
7. Hear then the story of the chosen people, as by selfishness and disobedience they fell away, and by affection were brought back,—all in recurring cycles so nearly alike in their main effect that we wonder how many hard lessons it takes to teach men the normal rewards of obedience.
8. A few characteristics mark the history of these falls and recoveries:—lapse of memory; weakness of will; lack of faith; want of self-restraint. These and their consequences recur again and again, of the same essential character but different phases, from Genesis to Malachi.
9. The Old Testament is, among other things, a picture gallery of object lessons. It shows the human being, with human faults and failings, as he is without God.
10. It also shows human nature as it may become under the guidance and leadership of God. It is not only didactic, but it shows *results*. In satisfying human judgment and longing for truth nothing can be more convincing.
11. For example consider the book of Judges. It is full of stories and pictures of anarchy in the mass,—of the worst human cruelties and abasements in the history of individuals without God. But in the story of Ruth the curtain is lifted on a little community where God was worshipped, and the simple virtues as God meant them to be are illustrated.

12. And more than all, the Old Testament shows God himself—as he is. Every characteristic gathered up in our Westminster Catechism describing God and his attributes may be picked out from the bible stories of his dealings with the children of men.

LESSON XI

GENESIS: THE BOOK OF BEGINNINGS

Read Joshua 1:1-9

BACKGROUND:

THE story of creation is told in six hundred words. The entire book contains fifty chapters, and carries the history of humanity down, in a very condensed and sketchy outline, to the time of Abraham. From his time the narrative deals with his descendants to the death of Joseph, which closes the book. I deem it useless to attempt a computation of that period by years. From the standpoint of closest adherence to the divine origin of the text it seems safe to infer that if God had deemed correct knowledge on that point necessary to the interpretation of the book, or necessary material for its defense, the record would have given at least a clear basis for the system. Bishop Ussher's total from Adam to Christ, about four thousand years, was only wrought out some three hundred years ago. It has long been treated by many as correct, but it has no claim to inspiration. It is man's word and not God's. A system elucidated in Davis' Dictionary of the Bible gives more than eleven thousand years to the time of the death of Sarah. A writer in one of the Encyclopaedias quotes a computation published not long after the opening of the christian era which allowed fifty thousand years for the period of the creation alone. Because no rule for the computation of time is definitely stated we need not be strenuous about the correctness of any theory. The numerous scientists who, in their eagerness to discredit the

Genesis story of creation, treat it as making definite assertions on questions of time, are not candid. Their disputation is as fictitious and unconvincing as the attack of Don Quixote on the windmills. It is not important, as the writer believes, for a student of the lessons of the Bible to rest his faith on any proposition,—however meritorious as a matter of argument,—not vital to a confident acceptance of the written word as divinely inspired. This applies also to the proper interpretation of the story of man's origin. The most assured proponents of the theory of human evolution venture no explanation of life or its origin. They assume its existence, and deal only with its operations. As man himself is undeniable, the dispute over his creation becomes largely a controversy over the question whether the process was rapid or slow. There are other marked differences, but this is not the question before us. The christian finds man with powers unlike any one but God, and while formulating his views according to his light must, on either theory, give God the glory. For us, in these studies, this is enough.

The book of Genesis is full of thrills. It narrates the lives and experiences of those who, belonging to God's elect people, were called on to wait long for the fulfillment of the divine promise of a national home and a function of its own. It shows in outline the growth of that people from Abraham and Sarah, with Isaac, to the swarming thousands who crowded the banks of the Red Sea on their eager way out of Egypt. Every adventure, while fitting perfectly into its surroundings, illustrates the watchful patience of God in turning even wilful acts of rebellion into stages in the journey to Canaan. The promises of such a home, reaching back to Abraham,

are always sharply outlined, and every individual afterward, in his mode of life and in detail, helps forward its consummation. Joseph lived in reliance on it, and died in that faith. The book closes with his charge to those he is leaving behind to carry his bones with them when they start on the final journey. It seems almost, as we close the book, that we can hear the tread of his trusty descendants, many generations away, as they marched to Shechem on their journey of conquest, with his embalmed remains on their shoulders, and buried him there on consecrated ground; and there still, at this very day, near Jacob's well is Joseph's tomb.

The analysis pertinent to this lesson is found under the previous lesson on "The Content and Intent of the Old Testament," and to that reference should be made.

LESSON XII

EXODUS: THE GREAT MIGRATION

Read Psalm 78:12-29

BACKGROUND:

THE life of the Israelites in Egypt is repeatedly said to be four hundred and thirty years. They went down as a few individuals at the invitation of Pharoah through Joseph, and came out as a nation on their way back to the early home of their great ancestor Abraham. This defined lapse of time was evidently no accident, for the Lord said to Moses, "I have remembered my covenant"; and the time was ripe, for he had said to Abraham,—"In the fourth generation they shall return." He had also said, of the life of the Israelites in Egypt,—"They shall serve them (the Egyptians) four hundred years." The long delay in Egypt had evidently two purposes. The iniquity of the Amorites,—said of those who then occupied Palestine,—was "not yet full." They were to have an ample chance to repent. Another reason was the necessity for nurturing and unifying the Israelites; and even when that was adequate, only long continued oppression would induce them to leave the residence of so great a period in Egypt, even to return to Canaan. It is plain that they must return en masse, or the plan of God for the development of a new nation must fail. Yet we can see that all this was in fact wrought out; the thing inherently impossible occurred; God's promise was fulfilled; and a multitude of Israelites marched into Canaan, and camped, among other places, in the vale of Shechem, where Abraham built his

first altar as an alien, and where he first received God's promise of ultimate ownership. There are those who controvert the story of the Israelitish migration on the mere assertion that it was impossible; but the fact that they got to Canaan, and stayed very long, is confirmed in so many ways that no footing is found for a denial of the migration itself. As for the narrative of events by the way, as given in Exodus, though involving frequent divine intervention, they are no more inherently improbable than the mere fact of migration, against which no case can be made.

It is plain that the long delay in the wilderness was not necessary to the movement to Canaan. God must have been aware that it would occur, but it was not within his commands. It was the result of cowardice and lack of faith. Those who were so timid, and trusted God so little, notwithstanding their experience of his patience and his power, would be poor material to rely upon in the fight for conquest, and as examples to the pagans around them. So for that reason, and probably also by way of punishment, they were allowed to die in the wilderness. The organization of so great a multitude both for marching and camping, and also for desultory warfare with opposing populations by the way, was a triumph of genius. Armies as great have been equally well organized before and since, so that it has had its counterpart in experience elsewhere. The Israelites had certain advantages by comparison:—they were of one great race, and immensely proud of it. By tradition and custom they were grouped in tribes and families. These were as closely tied together as the Scottish clans. They had always maintained headmen in each group, who felt the responsibility of leadership. They were bound

together by a common history and a common religion; and now, their wives and children with them, their fighting men were engaged in a common enterprise, and eagerly hoping for the fulfilment of an ancient promise. All these things reduced greatly the difficulties of keeping so great a multitude under control. And,—most of all,—they had daily evidence of divine leadership, and Moses himself, great as he was, had the relief and comfort of constant access to God direct, and they were led by a cloud and a pillar of fire.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. History is a record of high spots and of extraordinary people. A narrative of incidents in detail would be uninteresting and uninstructive. Even a biography mentions the peaks only.
2. A distinguished author wrote some years ago a novel of normal length, but it dealt only with the incidents of a single day. John's gospel is another illustration. He says at the close that if all the acts which Jesus did were transcribed,—“I suppose the world itself would not contain the books that would be written.”
3. In Exodus there are many gaps. The story of forty years is told in forty chapters, averaging about a page apiece; indeed only twenty-seven, of about a like number of average pages, are given to the migration itself.
4. It is indeed a rare book which in that space can picture a thousand thrilling scenes, and as many topics filled with meaning, of which since that day countless books and sermons have been made, and still the interest has not been exhausted.
5. It is a picture of varied life;—in the higher civilization of Egypt; in the sheep pastures back of the hills, where Moses kept his flocks; on the dry and forbidding plains of the wild country; on the mountain tops.
6. Lives of men, great and near great, and others small and mean; tales of multitudes on the march, many probably with but faint apprehension of the purpose of the journey; others eager to see the fulfilment of the age-old promise to Abraham.

7. Egypt and its royal house; its pride and its apprehensions; its fears of the growing numbers, and its deliberate isolation, of that strange people Israel in Goshen.
8. Egypt, with its history,—ancient even then; its massive and magnificent temples; its splendid and powerful priesthood; its profound learning, and its acute diplomacy.
9. The children of Israel, with their singular loyalty to one God, in the very midst of a pagan world; submissive as slaves, but resentful as injured men.
10. And here in our picture is also shown the struggle of the leaders for a new discipline, all the harder because for generations they had been denied the power and the privilege of self defense.
11. And here we see this great multitude learning to march in military order, and under the tutelage of God himself learning the art of self government.
12. Here also we see the development of true worship, led by a trained corps of priests; following the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night; entranced by a solemn and splendid ritual.
13. Onward toward the great climax of their journey, sobered by many a disaster; warned by spectacular punishments when they rebelled; and growing into a self-respecting national life;
14. Until, when their confidence in God was sufficient for a victorious conquest, they reached at last the borders of the promised land.

LESSON XIII

LEVITICUS: THE STATUTE BOOK

Read Job 38

BACKGROUND:

THE people of Israel were, of all the world, devoted to the worship of one God,—by the covenant of Abraham under whom they inherited the benefits of God's promise to make them a nation and provide them a home, and also by their own choice. They made God the fount of their blessings, and also the head of their government. It was therefore a theocracy. In the preamble to the ten commandments God gave this as the basis of his right to their obedience. He said—"I am thy God, who hath brought thee out of bondage."

The world was pagan, and they had, for their whole history, lived in the midst of idolatry. Speaking in condensed form, God had evidently three main purposes in view:

1. To impress on them the singleness of the Godhead, and to hold to one God their sincere worship;
2. To illustrate in and by them the mode of life which is calculated to keep men both happy and useful; and
3. To make of them such a shining example of the benefits of righteousness as to draw, eventually, the whole world into similar relations to him.

Thus he founded in the wilderness a spectacular system of worship, by sacrifices and offerings, which might help to hold their loyalty.

Then he gave them a system of land ownership under which every family might own its own farm,—and could never lose it.

Then he gave them a national home where they could cultivate the blessings of liberty, and gave them the promise of his own personal preservation and protection, all upon no condition except loyalty and obedience.

The laws he gave them were all directed to one or other of these main objects; and it is remarkable, above almost anything else, how simple these laws were;—how free from the merely arbitrary;—and how well adapted to the happiness and well being of the people themselves. If God was indeed the maker and master of heaven and earth, (and this they recognized), it was manifestly proper that this should be evidenced by worship and true reverence; and yet, knowing their weakness, God added to his command that this should not be forgotten an appeal to their sensibilities, by a display of magnificence in the form of worship; and having conferred on them capacity for intelligent labor, with personal rewards for diligence and perseverance, he gave them fortitude for the exercise of their powers; and by making the home farm inalienable he gave them hope and prospect, even in spite of misfortune or wilful neglect.

And he advanced them, as a nation, to such a position of prosperity in the sight of the godless peoples about them that if only they had themselves proved faithful they should have occupied a place of unequalled influence, for the good of the whole human race.

Thus we are moved with great wonder and admiration at those institutions and laws. Passing over a few minor ones which at this stage of the world we are not able to understand, no system has ever been devised, which could excel or equal those provisions, for the purpose designed; and no one has ever been able to suggest methods of government which could, if observed, more

completely satisfy every human need, or build up humanity to a better state of excellence.

This is our token that it was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. The puzzle of humanity is to adjust human life, as it must be lived, in the midst of other beings having aspirations and desires of their own not always considerate or kind, to its surroundings, so as to make the best of a very beautiful world.
2. Human lives, apart from God, are profoundly selfish, and generally grasping, so that conflicts fill the atmosphere. These we will admit, merely in our human philosophy, are wrong, and deeply to be regretted.
3. Personal industry and the spirit of concession are vital to human progress and contentment. If we were to ask God, who loves us all and desires our happiness, how to live peacefully together, would he not point us to the Hebrew law as an object lesson,—a prescription for contentment.
4. Here is an ideal of physical activity,—which makes for health; also an ideal of communion with nature, which affords many joys; and an ideal of aspiration, as illustrated by the song of Moses (90th Psalm), as he observed the heavenly bodies; and also an ideal of family affection and mutual helpfulness.
5. Here also is an ideal of worship, recognizing God's greatness, and submitting to his guidance; and also an apprehension of his wisdom and kindness in packing our lives with blessings adapted to our apprehension, and suited to our use.
6. So the constitution which God gave humanity is not merely, when thoughtfully considered, a system of government as a convenience, but an infinitely wise pattern for all human government,—intermingling restraint of human passions with opportunity for growth in the best human development.
7. Moses was himself an example of what man can become, and of the use he can make of his great faculties, when he is "meek":—which does not mean that out of a lack of self assurance he abased himself, but only that he recognized the immense superiority of his chosen king.

8. That it was an ideal system, essentially a democracy,—adapted for a self-governing people, is indicated also by the fact that we in this country have adopted it in its essence, and framed our system upon it. The use, or rather perversion, of it by the wilful people for whom it was given does not reduce its high quality as a well adapted and adequate system.

LESSON XIV

NUMBERS: WANDERING IN THE WILDERNESS

Read Nehemiah 9:13-21

BACKGROUND:

“**I**F I WERE KING”;—well what would you do if you were king? Are you sure you would like to be king,—even of your own town? To the people Moses was at least the visible representative of royalty; they called him “My Lord.” Moses was meek, but not weak. Pharaoh would make a good witness on this point; yet he nearly broke down under it; and God, who was very tender with him, sent him a wise adviser, Jethro, his father-in-law,—who suggested a mode of dividing labor and responsibility which became a part of the permanent Hebrew organization. And still Moses was sometimes nearly overcome. Perhaps you have said sometimes that in some things you could have done it better. Would you like to be king in Palestine now? Or in Arabia; or in Russia? No, thank God it was Moses, and not Williamson or Smith, who held that place of care and responsibility among the Jews. They seem to have had then, as they have had ever since, a special facility for making the lives of their governors miserable. Do you think any man,—Moses or David, or even Abraham,—could have done all that Moses did, and ruled so wisely, and so successfully but for the guidance of God? No? Then thank God and take courage. Everything which promised ultimate good for humanity was at stake:—the lamp of true worship which God meant to light on the hills of Jerusalem; the

teaching and nourishing of the chosen race in spite of their lack of faith and loyalty; and greatest of all, the coming of Jesus, and through him our own knowledge of the truth; all these were at stake. We have here therefore ample evidence of the patience and persistence of God, and of his wisdom in selecting fit men, and prescribing appropriate laws.

These things are all found in Numbers, and not alone a code of laws and census details. God's intervention in every emergency,—and his many miracles of preservation;—of food and drink;—great lessons of individual faith, and noble bursts of poetry, filled with gratitude to God, rise here and there out of the prolix narrative like springs of water in the desert. As when Balaam, hired to officially curse the swarming Israelites, finds it impossible; for the power and goodness of their God so impress him that he himself longs for like protection and guidance; and he exclaims, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

All through the forty years of journeying in the wilderness miracles accompanied them; miracles of food and drink and clothing for their maintenance; and miracles of wonder, to preserve their reverence and obedience for God. Their clothing did not wear out, nor their shoes; their feet did not swell, notwithstanding their continual marching and counter-marching; miracles of leadership, as when the cloud stood still upon the tabernacle or moved forward; also the pillar of fire by night. If any reader doubts the miracles he must also doubt the whole story; but how then can he explain the simple facts that once the people were in Egypt, and afterwards they were found in Canaan; that they had no body of law while they dwelt in Egypt, but had

when they were found in Canaan; that they were submissive slaves in Egypt, and conquering armies in Canaan. Read then this simple narrative, and observe how adequately every change is explained and accounted for; and how easily it falls together if we accept wholly the narrative of God's power and guidance, but how incredible if this be omitted. With the stakes driven, and the vital changes taken for granted, the book of Numbers explains these, and the reasons for them. If not, then we are driven to far more incredible assumptions. Thus we either abandon our search for an explanation or return to our short paraphrase of the Mohammedan creed,—“God is the Lord, and Moses was his prophet.”

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. The writer of the book of Numbers had either but little apprehension of chronology or he saw but little occasion for an orderly current narrative, such as one would use who set himself, from completed materials, to writing history. Events are narrated very clearly, but the order is broken by interposing at intervals lengthy statutes, frequently on a different subject.
2. Is it therefore to be inferred that the book of Numbers, or the other books of the Pentateuch, are made up at a later time from scattered fragments, pieced together by unknown compilers?
3. That inference has been drawn by writers who assume that if written by a single author it would be consecutive and orderly. Perhaps this would be a fair assumption if it purported to be written *after the occurrence*, by one who had all the materials before him.
4. But the impressionist mode is not found only in Numbers. It is noticeable in the much later biographies of Christ. Of the latter there have been proposed many “harmonies,” designed to make out of the materials a procession of events according to their real order in time. In this respect the four gospels,—when checked by comparison,—make this fairly practicable.

5. But the very probability that a writer preparing a narrative at a later time would make it consecutive seems to the writer inconsistent with such a theory, and to indicate rather that it was written at the time of the events, more or less like a diary, in which the record of events of importance might easily be followed by fragments of new laws appropriate to emergencies, as the writer of a diary jots down reflections of his own; or bursts of poetry; or anecdotes worth preserving.
6. If we conceive that Moses wrote it, from time to time, as occasion suggested, over the period of some forty years, and left it in its original form, would this not explain its lack of continuity and orderliness? Does not common experience teach that this is likely to occur? Is it not *more* probable that it was contemporary with the events narrated? Would not such a narrative be extremely artificial if written at a later date in the form of memorabilia?
7. *Some one* wrote it,—but who or when? Would not an artificially correct and consecutive statement, in chronological order, rather suggest a redaction than would memoranda like these.
8. The present writer compares it in his own mind with the selected and scattered events in Martin Luther's life as recorded in the "Schonberg Cotta Family."
9. It seems therefore needless and unsatisfying to search the book of Numbers with such care to find consecutive history, as if one could reasonably expect it to read like a chapter from Macaulay. Is it not more convincing and satisfying as it is?
10. Does not the very vagueness and incompleteness of the narrative, between the return of the spies and the narrative of the census, and other steps toward entering the land of promise, at the close of the long wandering, indicate the comparative unimportance of the events of the intervening period to the writer, whoever he was?
11. The reason of that prolonged delay,—while it was made to subserve the purposes of more complete organization, and to aid in making the habit of worship automatic,—seems to be amply defined in Chapter 14,-34, where the Lord fixes its period—forty years,—to conform to the number of days the spies took to search the land.

12. The common reader, if he should omit the chapters containing the detailed statutes, must be dull indeed if he would not get many a thrill from the mere reading of this book of action, and be led to glorify God for his evident goodness, power and patience.

LESSON XV

DEUTERONOMY: MOSES' FAREWELL ADDRESS

Read Deuteronomy 8:7-18

BACKGROUND:

THE last days of Moses have arrived. He knows he is approaching his end. He knows he is not to enter the promised land, but he knows his people are, and God's promise is to be kept at last. For himself he is nearly through. His successor has been selected and qualified. The Lord said,—“Take thee Joshua.” The time for marching into Canaan is approaching;—is almost here. Then God said to Moses, “Get thee up into this Mount Abarim, (Nebo),—and see the land,” and they “pitched before Nebo.” Though still strong of body and mind Moses knew that the reason for this was special, and that the time for his departure was at hand; and like others, when advancing years come to be felt, his mind turned backward. Deuteronomy is the book of his reflections. He thought and spoke and wrote of the long days in which God had been good to him and to Israel. And so his loyal heart, full of the spirit of poetry, expressed itself in song, and in that rehearsal of God's mercies we find some of the most appealing literature of the Old Testament; and now and again he recurs, with profound pathos, to the sad judgment that is soon to fall upon him,—that he shall *see* the land of promise but shall not *enter* it. The climax of his eloquent story comes, I think, in the 8th chapter and again in the 28th. His prophetic spirit, looking far into the future, is full of apprehensions;—“If thou wilt

not observe to do all the words of this law . . . the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the world to the other.”—“In the morning thou shalt say would God it were even; and at even thou shalt say would God it were morning”; but at last he comes to the end, and with a long sigh he lays his weary head on the shoulder of a pitying angel and falls asleep.

If you have never found these things in the book of Deuteronomy read it again, and see how full it is of happy and sad recollections; of promises kept; of daily evidences of God’s goodness. Then read Mrs. Alexander’s beautiful poem of “The Burial of Moses.” What choice then would you make between the life and death of Moses and the life and death of, for example, Saul; or Alexander; or Julius Caesar; or Napoleon; or even Aaron, who, though intending well, was weak, as well as meek, and who disappointed so many hopes. We meet Moses long afterward in bible history, and know something of his welcome in heaven; but if we had nothing but the manner of his death and burial the human heart would aspire to a similar end:—“Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.”

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. Washington’s farewell address contained some sixty thousand words. Moses’ farewell address contained, including the recital of statutes,—some twenty thousand;—excluding the statutes, around fifteen thousand.
2. Both are full of patriotism and pathos, and both men credit their personal successes to the goodness of God.
3. Moses’ greatest fear for his people was that they would *forget* God’s mercies and loving kindness. Hence his closing message is a rehearsal of the main events of their history, in which the hand of God was so distinctly seen.

4. All through that history God himself had urged his people to "remember," and directed them to set up memorials. He said, again and again,—"When thy children ask what meaneth this, thou shalt say," etc.
5. One of the most affecting appeals for remembrance, as an aid to gratitude, is in Kipling's "Recessional,"—"Lord God of Hosts be with us yet; lest we forget; lest we forget."
6. Those who read little, or think little, of the events of the past can have but little incentive to gratitude. Those who know little or regard little "the hole of the pit from which they are digged" can feel but a slight obligation to God,—who "set their feet upon a rock."
7. And those who know little or care little for the problems of the past, or the manner in which they were solved,—can they be good advisers when similar problems again recur,—as they are sure to do?
8. This is one of the great advantages to a Christian of familiarity with the scriptures and with the hymns of faith.
9. So Moses, in his closing days, rehearsed God's goodness,—as Washington did,—and under somewhat similar circumstances; and both plead with those who should come after them to remember how wisely and graciously they had been led.
10. It is said that Washington, when about to read his Farewell Address, paused to adjust his spectacles, and made a deep impression on his hearers by saying, as he wiped his glasses, that his vision, as well as his bodily strength, had been largely exhausted in the service of his country.
11. Moses retained his vision and his bodily strength to the last. "His eye was not dim nor his strength abated." Yet his soul cried out in sadness because he was not to see the triumphal result of his labors. "I am not to go over," he said.
12. Is it true that the works of the righteous live after them? Surely it may be said of Moses, as it was said of Abel, that "being dead he yet speaketh." But is Moses a true example in this respect for others, less conspicuous?
13. Are the good works of the simple and inconspicuous Christian forever ended when he dies. Is the pathetic inquiry of Rip Van Winkle to be repeated over the grave of each of us,—"Are we so soon forgotten when we're gone?"

14. P. T. Barnum said that when a man died he was missed only as much as a leaf from a green tree; the little broken place where he was attached would quickly heal, and the world would soon not miss him; but while this may be true of his personality, we know it is not true of his influence. Each of us has made his mark, for good or ill, on one or more, who remain to praise or blame him.
15. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth," says the scripture;—"that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them."

LESSON XVI

JOSHUA: THE STORY OF CONQUEST

Read Joshua 24:1-13

BACKGROUND:

THE books of the Pentateuch have closed with Deuteronomy, and yet the entrance into Canaan and its conquest has not even begun. Moses probably planned a complete narrative of human history, from the beginning, including the story of the great migration from the time of departure out of Egypt to and also with the entry into Canaan; but at his spectacular death and burial in Moab the narrative was broken off; then, with the climax omitted, we find it completed in the book of Joshua, in full detail. Who then wrote this story of accomplished results? Nothing positive can be asserted, and though the query intrigues us it is not important to answer it with assurance. The book itself however is the only record of the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham. If not written by Joshua it was *about* Joshua, and records not only the conquest of Canaan but its apportionment among the tribes. Whether written by Joshua or compiled from documents prepared under his supervision the narrative is evidently authentic. In form and detail it implies a first hand observer, and it conforms so perfectly with what we know from other sources of the tribes, their territorial boundaries and of the included cities, that, its verity being supported by satisfying evidence, real and circumstantial, we cannot doubt its divine origin or approval,—whoever was the author. The

present writer, speculating as to its origin, has convinced himself that Joshua himself wrote it. He, it is said, was Moses' "minister," which, among other things, may well be his "secretary." It seems likely that the writings of Moses himself were transcribed by a helper, though at his dictation. The physical difficulty of writing, as it was then done, and the time consumed, considered with the many activities of Moses', suggest that Joshua was accustomed, during the whole wilderness journey, to handle the brush or stylus in making the abundant documents which Moses prepared. At least it is a satisfying surmise, and seems to connect the story of Joshua with the very similar preceding narrative. The last few verses, written after the death of Joshua, were by an unknown hand, and are almost identical with verses 6 and 7 of Chapter 2 of Judges.

Here then begins the normal existence of the Hebrew people. In the desert for forty years they had been miraculously fed and nurtured. Their staple food was manna, which fell in sufficient quantities, without sowing or reaping, for which time was not available. Their clothing did not wear out, and even their constant travelling left no ill effects. But when they crossed Jordan they "did eat the old corn of the land."

Without venturing to draw from the history of the Israelites a theory or doctrine general enough to assert or defend in controversial terms, it is not possible, the writer thinks, to overlook the recorded experience,—which seems to be human as distinguished from merely Jewish,—that men, left to themselves, drift downwards, and do not rise upward; also that even the most convincing experience and observation, operating only on the mind, will not alter this tendency. Again this

proves, as the Scriptures assert, that it is with the heart that man believes to righteousness.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. Joshua was about sixty years of age when he entered Canaan. Excepting Caleb, he was presumably the oldest man of his race. He was greatly esteemed, and many Jews who easily lost their own sense of dependence on God held fast, at least formally, until after Joshua died.
2. Then the consciousness of God faded away, notwithstanding the many memorials, and even the memories themselves. The mind is not enough to hold men fast. This, I suppose, is the function of the sensibilities,—the “heart.”
3. Yet even today, after learning this well, there are many who expect to turn men heaven-ward by convincing their minds. Experience proves that while the mind must *approve* it is the heart that *inclines*.
4. All the qualities of humanity should work together, each contributing its share. A wise man said,—“God has given man two ears and one tongue, to the end that he should hear twice and speak once.”
5. Is there really a marked change in these thousands of years in the mode of approach to win the confidence and loyalty of men? Has it not always been true that love is a stronger motive than logic?
6. As far back as Aesop it was seen that the warmth of the sun is more effective than the bluster of the wind. One of our best remembered “fables” is to this effect.
7. Is it not also as true now as in the days succeeding Joshua that the concerns of the present dull very quickly the memories of the past?
8. And yet our susceptibilities are very easily wrought upon so that both heart and mind can be carried back to the days when God’s goodness was freshly felt. This is not memory alone, but a fresh *experience*. We are all conscious of it.
9. This is one of the merits and advantages of reflection. How much we lose by the pressure of new events, which fill the

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attention, occupy the mind, and lead to an unconscious lowering of standards.

10. It often seems that children are taught too constantly, and too many things; and so they,—like their forbears,—“forget to remember.”

LESSON XVII

JUDGES: A NARRATIVE OF SCATTERED EVENTS WITH A COMMON TIE

Read Nehemiah 9:6-8, 26-31

BACKGROUND:

THE book of the Judges, like some others of these ancient books, is not still life. It is a movie:—more perhaps like what used to be known as a panorama;—a series of pictures, connected in theme, passing one by one, slowly enough to enable the spectators to catch its meaning; having a beginning, a middle, and also an end. The pictures in Judges are lifelike, but distinct. The scenery and personages are different. They have a common tie, usually a personality, whom we can identify, though scarcely twice alike. They remind me of a book which once deeply interested me. It was a series of short stories called “The Adventurer of the North.” One marked man was the hero of them all, but always in a different aspect, and never twice in the same adventure. Though the scenes of the period of the Judges spread over more than three hundred years, and different persons are on the canvas, no reader could doubt that there is a tie that is common to them all, or the fitness of having them bound together. Here is a picture of battle and warfare in which Gideon and his three hundred bore their heroic part. Here also was another battle which Deborah and Jael won, more by strategy than by open struggle. Here also is the story of Samson; and the pitiful tale of Jephthah’s daughter; and here, almost unnoticed in the tale as it proceeds,

are long, quiet periods of diligent life on the farm, and of affectionate home life, the sweetest of which is pictured in the lovely story of Ruth. The period of the whole narrative is supposed to be some four hundred years. We are not here concerned to compute it with care, if that were possible, but only to follow the thread which winds through it,—in and out among the times of fierce fighting, the period of quiet rest, the time of complete subjection to alien races, and the times of wild and devoted heroism. The thread on which the tales are strung evidently is the outstretched hand of God in each of the critical events, always in pursuance of his single plan, early traced in history of the Hebrew race, and never lost to the attentive observer, even when the peculiar people were least like the God they professed to worship. But perhaps we tend to exaggerate the evils of that period, because the events recorded are given in much detail, and these color the whole picture. So much time is unaccounted for that it seems probable that the quiet village and country life depicted in the book of Ruth is, on the whole, characteristic; and thus we see why the rules of conduct and the modes of living there found, which must have originated in the laws of Moses, were so naturally and so generally observed. We would love best to think of the ordinary life of the people as represented by the habit of Boaz, who greeted his reapers, evidently in accustomed salutation, like our “Good morning,” with “The Lord be with you,” and they answered “The Lord Bless thee.”

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. Scarcely can the common life even of a small community be briefly depicted over a considerable period,—chiefly because

life is not uniform. Except in the round of the clock, or the recurrence of dawn or twilight, the course and habit of life is individual and variable. Much more is this true when we attempt to write the story of a country or a race.

2. At the very time when Samson in the province of Dan was playing his foolish tricks on the Philistines, whose power he resented, the love story of Ruth and Boaz may have been proceeding in the quiet country about Bethlehem. We have no dates for either.
3. Even less are other historical events, widely separated in time, likely to be similar in character. So the story of England, over a similar period, is a narrative of events strung, as it were, on a thread, with little detail on which just comparisons can be made.
4. And yet in Israel, as among the people of England, there is visible to a reader of this history a common tendency; a common aspiration; a growing solidarity; all of which emerge at last into a conscious relation which held them strongly together against a common enemy, and made them a nation.
5. The common origin and common history of the Israelites, remembered and reported by parents to children, and their common apprehension of God,—unfaithful as they often were,—which led them to cry out to him for help in emergencies, is a lesson to us of the reality of the family tie.
6. And in the history of this unhappy period the Israelites themselves recognized a warning. The wide spread of irreligion at the present day among ourselves has resemblances enough to teach us the value of memory, and to lead us to recall God's goodness, but it need not make us hopeless.
7. The emergence of the children of Israel at last into a homogeneous nation, with a common religion, and some sense of obligation, may well encourage us to hope that the way of righteousness, which is the way of peace, will ultimately prevail in the present world.
8. Is history "bunk," as it was characterized recently by a prominent business man, or is it a real warning, and also a real encouragement? Is memory only an aid to men in the small details of activity; is it not also a guide in respect to the outcome of habits and modes of life?

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9. Much of the earnest labor of the thoughtful is devoted to correcting or rejecting theories of life and conduct supposed to be new; but these often gather their following from those who lack both knowledge of the past and reflection on its lessons.
10. Yet the book of Judges also shows, as Elijah afterwards learned by divine teaching, that even when the life of the multitude seems to be lived without remembrance of God's mercies, yet the subconscious mind is aware of a surrounding atmosphere which could have no other source.
11. And so in our own day, in spite of apparent coldness and indifference, unusual events, such as the world war, the Japanese earthquake, the great floods, serve to open our eyes so that we can see, as the servant of Elisha saw, "the mountains full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha."

LESSON XVIII

THE OLD TESTAMENT, AND THE LAYMAN'S SIMPLE TESTS OF CREDIBILITY

Read Psalm 104

BACKGROUND:

ONE of the striking things about the first six books of the Bible, (known as the Hexateuch), to one who is but considering them curiously, is that they are essentially about God. If you leave God out you scarcely have a story;—certainly none of interest to persons intently listening, as for instance Arabs listen to tales of experience or adventure. Some profess to see in them mere traditions or myths, handed down from generation to generation with serious intent, but without historic verity. But no one, I believe, deems them fiction in the ordinary sense,—i.e., invented by a single writer, and dated back merely to preserve a semblance of history. But if God be omitted, or not regarded as an authentic figure, then the stories do not cohere, and have not enough meaning to be traditions. The whole course of life, as they depict it, is evidently believed, at least by the writers, to be under divine direction. The books have a distinct plan, a definite beginning and outcome, but none of any significance if God is left out. Why then should they have been so carefully,—miraculously, we may well say,—preserved, while every other writing,—except boastful tablets by very ordinary men,—are lost?

Another striking thing about those books is that they purport to describe the working out of a plan of

God,—not trivial or vulgar, as the classic myths, and not casual, but connected, and not about imaginary individuals, or an abnormal race, but continuously and progressively about a race and a country with a definite and growing mission; and behold we recognize now, after all these thousands of years, both the country and the people.

It would be foolish, as well as unprofitable, for us who are christians to begin with, to undertake to *prove* the verity of these writings, but we may, by the use of our worldly intelligence, confirm our faith in them as genuine, authentic and trustworthy, when properly construed.

No one now, I think, regards these books as historically fictitious. Every year, by examination and research, their geographic and biographic references,—even the most ancient,—are being confirmed; and the surrounding people and their kings, so often mentioned, and even named, are being identified and found to be authentic.

Another remarkable fact is that there is nothing, known or preserved, to the contrary. Evidently the authors, whoever they were, supposed themselves to be writing authentic history, and believed their narratives, about God as well as about individuals and places, to be true. It was their evident intention to manifest God to the world as an individual and personal guide and friend.

It is not the writer's desire or intention to interpret those writings, but if any one sees in them less than a real message of God, and what they say by way of description a real picture of God, it must be because he deems it reasonable to be passive, and to demand to be

shown; and not because he has any information to the contrary.

Is it not true that man's most confident convictions are derived by weighing probabilities and applying tests? In medicine, for instance, if, in a given instance, there is a certainty of pain, and if a cure occurs by the application of a given remedy we write this down in the pharmacopaeia as a cure for that affection. If on doubtful evidence of the location of a certain ancient castle we go and look and find it there, we put that down also as a proven fact. Why not test the veracity of the Hexateuch in a similar manner? Here are stated circumstances for which one must account, if he is in doubt:

1. The geography is found correct and authentic.
2. The most outstanding personages named are found to be authentic.
3. The race whose history is the subject of the story is authentic.
4. The narrative is very ancient, and nothing is known to the contrary.
5. The references to known countries,—Babylon, Egypt, etc., are verified.
6. The authors believed it to be true.
7. The contentions to the contrary are argumentative, and may be wrong.
8. No other explanation is known for assured events.
9. The nature and character of God, as there described conforms to everything else we know.

In the last century serious doubts were for a time entertained about the existence of Jesus. Many reasons were given. An eminent English Archbishop (Whately) wrote a little book about Napoleon, in which he con-

clusively proved, by the very same arguments, that Napoleon himself was a fictitious character, invented by interested persons for their own purposes. It was a demonstration; for Napoleon was still living, though visible and audible to but few, and readers could realize the fallacy of those arguments as applied to Jesus Christ, the proofs being essentially the same. If there are people who cannot accept the veracity of these elemental books though in so many details their statements are definitely proved, and though as to the rest nothing to the contrary is known, why should they accept as true the history of Greece, or of the Roman Empire, or the life and labors of Alexander or Caesar?

It may be asked why this writer does not extend the argument to the other books of the Old Testament. The reasons are these, among others:

- a. The Hexateuch comprises for the most part a continuous and connected story, in considerable detail, commencing with the origin of man, describing as a fact of history the loss of his original *status* as a child of God; outlining a plan for his restoration, including the development of a new nation, loving and worshiping God, and culminating in the verified creation of such a nation, with a divine polity, in a home of its own.
- b. These books purport to be much the most ancient consecutive documents known to men, and furnish an opportunity for an adequate application of this criterion of verity.
- c. The Hexateuch stood alone for a very long time, and was always used among the Jews as a message from God; and to it, throughout the canon,—Old Testament and New,—references to it are made as containing God's test of human duty. Other books raise quite different questions, and the simple comparison I am suggesting might be lost in a maze of discussion over matters not relevant to my present topic.

LESSON XIX

THE LAYMAN AND HIS BIBLE

THE adult bible class is composed of men and women whose time and attention are concentrated, most of the time, on business or household duties which do not admit of logical theorizing, and therefore the conviction of the inspiration of the scriptures, if it comes by that method, is accepted or assumed on the authority of the church, or of those learned in theology. To strike them deeply it should also be confirmed by their own experience, by the methods which guide their mental operations in daily business affairs. It sometimes surprises even a teacher of experience to observe by what leaps the mind of a layman often passes from one stage to another of a theological proposition, unless it is able to trace its progress by the stepping stones on which his mind is accustomed to travel. Manifestly the method which brings real conviction is the only one dependable in a crisis. For this reason the present writer seeks and uses confirmative suggestions, which he supposes to be logical, but which appeal in large measure to experience and observation. For an example of this mode of reaching conviction take these:

1. We begin with God, as the creator, in some form, of all humanity. This is a primary conviction, and needs no proof, and it is therefore a dependable starting point.
2. God, having all power and infinite wisdom, would not bring humanity, with all its physical, mental and spiritual faculties, into existence without providing methods and materials by the use of which they may grow and flourish.

3. Having placed his creatures in a world packed with supplies for every physical want, and also sufficient for every high aspiration, God would not fail to show them, by some trustworthy and adequate method, how to find and utilize those supplies.
4. It would not be the part of infinite, or even worldly wisdom, to feed and nurse and lead humanity from birth to death without exertion or research of their own; therefore it is to be expected that God would not only permit but encourage the diligent use of their own powers, even though they may err, and though their errors may bring on them many sorrows.
5. Having given them a short physical existence, but powers and faculties adapted for a spiritual life of infinite extension and expansion, it would be expected that God would also provide supplies and nutriment for needs of that high character.
6. With these premises, which no functioning mind can question, we look about to see whether God has in fact furnished such needed information and put it within the reach of his creatures. Any loving parent, however illly equipped otherwise, would do that. Would God be less considerate?
7. Looking about to see, we find in existence a book known to us as the Bible, easily traced to a time in the early existence of humanity; purporting to be the very message we would expect; and, strange as it may seem, *we find no other*. If this is not indeed authentic then we have none, and never had. There are other good books, but none which, by any possibility, could fill that gap.
8. It has been a growing book, added to in new emergencies, and to meet new conditions, until the climax of history was attained, and nothing more was required; but it contains, in its smallest beginning, communications purporting to indicate man's origin from the hand of God, and showing that God is, and always has been, reachable at need, and how.
9. Fragments of other books are available, of varying age, but all are more or less doubtful as to authenticity or verity, or as to time; and none of these deal at all with the subject we have mentioned, the most vital to man,—body and soul.
10. New discoveries in the countries with which it purports to deal are constantly proving that it is no fiction, and no mere vision

of men, however far back its statements of fact are traced. It is not merely new light which is thrown upon its story, but new evidences of its verity.

11. In all its history men have looked to it, and found in it assurance; here also they have looked for comfort, for sources of power, for encouragement to hope; and we ourselves know of no want of the human spirit which it does not adequately meet. It has been the book of the heart of those who would know God, of all ages, and all races.
12. Can any one then convince us that it is not indeed God's message to needy humanity; his invitation to those in distress; his satisfying promises of a future life, or mode of life, with directions how to claim it and get it?
13. Besides all these it is full of object lessons, dealing with human experiences with it, and others without it; all so realistic and probable, and so pictorial and easily apprehended that we cannot believe it the invention of man, of any age.
14. The only open question on which men's minds can differ is its interpretation. It has been made by the astuteness of men to mean different things in some respects, but it is manifest that in none of these does it lack the essence of a true message of God to men.
15. If there were but one language among men, and if in that language meanings were always clear, so as to need no construction; and if, in the recorded language of God and men, the same word could, in every connection, always convey the same idea, then the interpretation of Scripture would be only a question of fact as to what the word was, as it came from God.
16. If God had intended, and had indicated the intent, that men should never misunderstand each other, and never misinterpret him, the question would still remain whether he intended that every error should be a sin, and every dispute about the divine intent a challenge to God of the same order as that of Satan, who refused to obey.

These I believe to be convincing indications of the verity of the bible, of the same nature and quality as busy people of the world are accustomed to rely upon in the ordinary affairs of life; and therefore satisfying proofs that God's expected message did not fail to arrive.

LESSON XX

THE LAYMAN'S LOGIC ABOUT GOD

Read Job 38

BACKGROUND:

THE world was here whirling on its axis, swinging in its orbit, responsive to forces which drew it and constrained it, opposing and yet assisting, compelling and yet limiting it. Within it and around it were heat and moisture,—grinding, splitting, crushing,—but in the process leaving each its place; the waters gathering, the hills projecting, the valleys opening; but all were dead, moved only by the pressure of forces they could not resist.

And from some dim remoteness God beckoned life, and it responded and came, eager, tremulous, quivering, and settled on the grim dead world, and penetrated everywhere, in earth and sky and water, and behold the world sprang into activity and beauty; voices of conscious existence arose everywhere; freshness and variety of glowing color, automatic growth, bearing in itself its own power of reproduction; birds, animals, fishes;—but as yet no responsible or responsive man; no head; no guide; no controller; every right quality, but as yet no useful purpose; singing streams but no listener; loveliness everywhere, but no observer; fruits ample, but no consumer; metals in abundance, but no user. If nothing more was to come what a waste of power, of taste, of skill, of apprehension. Then came man, for whose recurring needs all these are suited, and who has ever since been constantly using them. Yet

there are those who think,—or think they think,—that there was no connected plan. If this problem is not confused by verbiage it ought to be easy. Man lives by these things; he would have died without them. In every-day life wider gaps than these are bridged without difficulty. Every presumption, of which we use many, is an instance. If these things were only accidental,—“natural causes,” as some scientists call them, the effect might have preceded, or may at any time be found to precede, the cause; or man might have come first, or the order of growth have been reversed. Even law, which is often asserted as a cause, is only the habit of operating in a certain order, and could not exist if there were no such reliable order. Yet even if law could be conceived of as coming first, it would imply a design, or otherwise it would have nothing to operate upon. My grandmother said that no one was as blind as one who would not see. If then the creation of the need implies the creation also of the means of satisfying it, then provision for the high craving of the spirit is as dependable as provision for the needs of the body, and is to be traced and found in the same orderly way. Our human code of physical living and of reaching satisfactory conclusions, is much like this. Why not apply it also to the things of the soul?

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. The layman's daily life in the world of men and things is lived by tests which he has learned to apply, for the most part, automatically, starting with the knowledge derived from those who were old when he was young, and going on afterward in the ruts we call habits.
2. Following these, and connecting them when found to be in error by the evidence of his own senses, it is only the unusual thing which calls on him for a new decision.

3. Mark Twain's diary, which was expected to record some profound experiences, degenerated into a daily reiteration,—“Got up, washed and went to bed.” This was because daily habits are not exceptional, and there was nothing profound to write about.
4. If anyone deems this simple description of a mode of life, pursuing a daily course by habit, and only rarely called on to devise something entirely new, to be wrong or erroneous, I call him to witness that this is about what he does himself.
5. It is even so with his thinking. He is a Republican or a Democrat because his father was. He sees the world as he has been taught to see it. The advice he gives and the advice he takes is approved because of its harmony with customary modes of thought.
6. These habits of thought and action enable him to live in a measure of peace. He does not often have to revise his judgments, nor to remold his manner of life.
7. These things are so because they are found, on the whole, to work well. If they were not usually reliable and tenable he would be brought up standing often by a fall, or a blow, or a blunder.
8. He trusts in God without thinking much about it because he finds his faith to work well. If it did not he would be often finding it necessary to revise his faith. Is this not a normal, easy and satisfying test of soundness?
9. This is not dullness nor stupidity. Neither is it ignorance. It is the application to his religious ideals and his normal life of the same principles and methods which he has found satisfying in his dealings with the world about him.
10. If God made man in his own image, and also devised the rules by which his life,—physical and religious,—is governed, is it necessary to suppose that God must lead man's mind or his heart by devious or startling or adventurous ways, while his daily life is simple and plain?
11. The human mind works as the body works,—by means godlike and super-human, and which man himself cannot understand, sometimes guided by instructions, but oftener led by hopes, desires, affections. Man is usually quietly led, and not forcibly

pushed; and if his heart is right his mind is apt to follow the same course. So his beliefs about God usually follow the lines of his approved inclinations, and are usually sound.

This is not profound, but every ordinary man, not seeking the unusual, will, I think, confirm it.

LESSON XXI

THE LAYMAN'S EVIDENCES OF GOD

Read Psalm 145:9-20

BACKGROUND:

Psalm 147

ANY one is blind, it seems to me, who, apart from inspired teaching, can live in the world and see no convincing signs of God. He must, for one thing, forget his merely human assurance that there is no effect without an adequate cause. For another, he must decline to accept the evidence of his senses, for the physical world is full of tokens that an intelligence superior to his own has been and still is at work. Mere physical life is itself superhuman. Life capable of reproduction; trees and fruits bearing in themselves the sources of new or extended life; roots or bulbs and seeds having power to choose and extract from a complex soil qualities and colors, each peculiar to its own type, without confusion or mistake; moisture and its conversion into clouds and rain; liquids, as water, offering but little resistance to solids, and yet in the mass capable of floating navies; foods, with capacity to build up and maintain the physical body and its faculties; automatic breathing, for air; automatic pumping, for blood; automatic digesting, for food;—these and all those extraordinary faculties of humanity which no animal can attain, teach anyone who is willing to be taught of an intelligence and power almost too great to be apprehended. The only things which, humanly speaking,—without inspiration,—one might doubt, are God's goodness, his consideration or care for the

individual; planning; extending his outreach into the long future; providing for life without the body; for spiritual gifts and qualities. These things and their just conclusions, such as events injurious in themselves but working out for good; poisons effectual as medicines; broken plans clearing the way for better ones; may be and have been, by a few, wrought out to tenable conclusions by profound human reasoning; but mere philosophies about them may differ. The coming of Christ, and the record of his life and death and teachings, with the widespread knowledge of the Old Testament which it explains and fulfils, has verily "turned the world upside down," and corrected many honest errors of humanity, such as those of Plato, Socrates and Cicero. Both compilations of scripture together have given humanity ample testimony about God. Out of them, approved and confirmed by human reasoning, has been extracted and sublimized the definition of God found in the Westminster Catechism which it seems to me conforms to and fits in with knowledge of him derived from every source.

"God is a spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth."

Such is the picture of God painted for us in the bible. If we cannot or will not accept it, in substance, then we have no God, for if less than that He is nothing to us. Then we are in the dark. We peer into the dimness and we see nothing. We call and hear nothing. We have no future and no past. Our origin and destiny are both unknown. We shudder and shrink as the years increase and we approach the inevitable. It is for us as it was with Elymas the sorcerer when Paul rebuked

him; "Thou shalt be blind for a season," said Paul, and it is said of Elymas that a mist and a darkness fell upon him, and he reached out his hand to be led. No God forbid that we should fall into a pit like that.

But these things we, children of a christian heritage, have not been left to work out for ourselves. Generations of ancestry have learned and tested them, and we have entered into the fruits of their labours.

Many of the facts and convictions we most confidently trust are not worked out by our own reading or reasoning. Is it not one of the good gifts of God that we acquire these confident convictions by descent, as we acquire our personality, without new experiment? What would life be without a code of convictions instilled by parental instruction and example, which we may hold and use, correcting and enlarging them by new investigation and adventure of our own? What would life be at this day without habits,—of thought and action,—which we may use in the confidence that they have been already tested?

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. Taking Ussher's chronology of human history for convenience, averaging three generations to a century, there have now been about one hundred and eighty generations in recorded history. Each should have passed on to the next some convictions, at least, which the ancestors spent blood and sweat to acquire. In spite of these ought each of us to begin anew, and struggle through the same pains and labors, only to the same end?
2. No one should say so. No one does in fact say so, for then each child would have to create again even the elements of common knowledge,—the multiplication table, the alphabet, the meanings of words, the succession of time periods, etc., to say nothing of logic, philosophy, etc.

3. So also each generation would be without the events of prior history, the lessons of adventure, the discoveries of science, the formulae of experiences.
4. Why then should each new generation not have the benefits also of the acquirements of those who preceded them in the field of religion, knowledge of God and his dealings with humanity; his power, his goodness, his patience, his justice.
5. If we must disregard these, and begin anew the knowledge of God with each generation, why does not true wisdom require also that we should also disregard the accumulations of history and science.
6. Yet there are among us now many, assuming superior wisdom, who insist that our inheritance of the discoveries of the past about God and his plans for the world are not truly historical or dependable; and who sneer at our ancestors' religion, and urge us to begin again, on a new theory, and frame and build for ourselves. To do so we must speculate again over the same ground, and our descendants also may discard our conclusions.
7. Is it not enough to stand on the old ways and the old discoveries and experiences at least until clearer light and surer knowledge, verified and reliable, shall teach us their errors and how to correct them?
8. Thus we can well justify a calm conviction, though acquired from the past, and taught us by those who preceded us,—as wise as we, and as eager to be right.
9. We need not then be disturbed about the foundations of our faith, nor our assurance of our relation to God, nor our confidence in a future life of bliss, because it represents not merely the argumentation but the experience of the past. On the contrary we can amply justify holding to these as firmly, and for like reasons, as we hold to the established facts of history or mathematics, since they have been verified to us in the same convincing manner.
10. Here there is a defensible basis for a layman's belief in God and his divine nature, and in man's dependence on him and his promises.
11. All this is verified to us by the record of facts as well as didactics assembled in the old, old book which we are sure is divine in its origin and essence. On this, confirmed by our own experience and that of a line of godly ancestors, we can rest in peace.

The Old Testament

GROUP C

A PICTURE GALLERY of portraits of a few of God's great men, with a sketchy story of their greatness and their littleness, their high spiritual qualities and their failures; their gains and their reverses; their inconstant faith and their distressing doubts; showing what great ones God can make of mere folks, of like passions with ourselves.

LESSON

- XXII. ABRAHAM
- XXIII. JOSEPH
- XXIV. MOSES
- XXV. RUTH
- XXVI. DAVID
- XXVII. SOLOMON
- XXVIII. DANIEL

LESSON XXII

ABRAHAM

Read Genesis 23

BACKGROUND:

THE plans of God are long, long plans. Humanity, made in the image of God, has displayed a wondrous capacity for going wrong. Of its own strength it has shown no capacity for returning, nor could it rectify the past if it did. What then:—left alone, nothing but disaster could follow. But it was not God's plan to leave it alone, as was shown, at the first stage, by a very early messianic promise. The plan of restoration, as we know now, involved a new line, composed of worshippers of the one God, who should be his peculiar people, the conservators of his truth and the recipients of his revelation; and ultimately the Messiah, who should "save his people from their sins," should come through them. If this chain should anywhere be broken the residue of the plan must fail, including the coming of the messiah, which was its climax,—and this would be unthinkable. Thus the wilfulness and wickedness of man leading to such a disaster must be averted, and so the power and guidance of God throughout its course become essential. This perhaps explains the recovery of Abraham and Sarah from their dangers in Egypt and Moab; the "ram caught in the bushes" and slain instead of Isaac; the sale of Joseph into Egypt; the mission and training of Moses; and many other interventions and deliverances along the succession of events, evidently not accidents, and which the wisdom

of men could not have accomplished. It harmonizes with our sense of fitness that Abraham, with whom this chain of events began, should be a prince, in quality and person; a man of real magnificence; an imposing figure; an example of faith; a loyal and consistent friend; in all respects looming above the men of his own time, and even of all time He had magnetism which drew him the regard and attachment of men of every race, without compulsion. He worshipped Jehovah openly, wherever he was, before the eyes of pagans of every stripe. He was loyally attached to one wife, where men of similar standing about him had many. Can anything surpass, in graciousness and yet self-reliance, his negotiations for the purchase of Machpelah, wherein to bury Sarah. The children of Heth said,—“Thou art a mighty prince among us; in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead.” Can anything be more dignified, and yet kindly, than his reply that he could not consent to receive it as a gift, but only as a purchase? Can anything be kinder and yet more dignified than his request to Lot to choose the best of the grazing grounds for himself and his cattle? Abraham is yet the ideal man among all races; and there are none so great as to deny him reverence. He was a man of faith, and that is now his great distinction, but this does not, when considered in its broad sense, explain that event which is often cited as the highest example,—the sacrifice of Isaac. Abraham “believed God, and it was accounted unto him for righteousness”; but more than that, he accepted and relied implicitly on the words and promises of God. The promise was—“in Isaac shall thy seed be called,” and other language quite as explicit. These promises

would have failed if Isaac had been slain. The mere sacrifice of a child,—though greatly beloved,—as an offering to the Supreme Being,—was of course not unfamiliar to Abraham. It was done not seldom in pagan worship. It occurred much later in Israelitish history, when believed to be required in honor, as when Jephthah slew his young daughter in fulfilment of a vow he deemed binding. But Abraham felt so confident of the fulfilment of God's specific promises that when commanded to slay Isaac he must have been sure of an intervention to preserve him. If indeed he should go so far as to slay him, he must have felt assured that he would be raised again. How else could those promises, so often renewed, be kept. If God should fail him then, the residue of God's promises, depending on Isaac, must also fail, and how could he support his faith afterward. If this be true, then Abraham's answer to Isaac when the boy said,—“Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb?”, to which Abraham's answer was “My son God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering,” was not merely an evasion, to allay the boy's apprehensions, or satisfy his doubts, but a sincere expression of confidence that another offering would be provided, and that he and Isaac would go back together. Thus it could have been no surprise to Abraham when the ram was found caught in the thicket. His obedience to God, even to the very crisis when, humanly speaking, he might have been forgiven if he doubted the promises, was as great an evidence of faith,—aye, even greater, than if the blow had really fallen; for then not only would Isaac have died, but his father's hopes and his belief in God might have been buried with the beloved body, and Abraham might have gone back home a pagan again.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. The story of a great man's life may be told as an example to be imitated. This is good, but it avails little if the will or the power to imitate is lacking; or
2. It may be intended to show the world how God deals with his faithful ones. This is the most effectual way to guide the human will,—not merely to incite the imitation of a good example, but to incline the observer in like manner to trust God.
3. In the bible probably the latter is the prevailing reason for Abraham and his story.
4. Can God really direct and guide the lives of his children? Did he do so then? Does he now?
5. Would they, or could they, if the human will was equal to the effort, live the same kind of lives *without* God?
6. No, we observe that where the knowledge and faith of God are weak humanity easily sinks low.
7. Whereas one who from the heart worships a God of character grows more and more like him.
8. Our theory of the bible is that it records a great deterioration in humanity, which refused, and therefore lost, the divine guidance; but it also records a purpose of God to bring it back, or to furnish an adequate motive and divine aid to return.
9. So a record of great faith and of its normal rewards inclines others to similar faith.
10. It also helps to convince men that God is not only good and great, but wise and kind.
11. The story of the life and experience of Abraham is such a picture of God as a guide and friend, and a comment on or an illustration of his dealings with all humanity under like conditions.
12. It is from this story largely, I suppose, that we draw our definition of God, and our articles of faith concerning him.
13. We learn from it all these things about God and his dealings with the world:
 - a. He has long plans for the world of men;
 - b. When he wishes to start a new stock, to preserve his worship and keep it pure, he has a man in training, and calls him.

- c. He has often demonstrated this:—Noah; Abraham; Moses; Ezra; Paul; Luther; the Pilgrims; Washington; Moody; these are instances.
- d. Every one who trusts him wholly may find himself chosen for some important service;
- e. There are elements of fitness for the greater service which only those greatly endowed can perform. Those with equivalent faith but fewer great qualities may fill quite well a smaller circuit; so “they also serve who only stand and wait.”

LESSON XXIII

JOSEPH

Read Genesis 41:39-44, 45:1-13

BACKGROUND:

Is THERE anything in heredity? Jacob loved Rachel with a tenderness and constancy rare in those days, and he sorrowed deeply when she died. Joseph was her first-born son. Benjamin, her other son, was probably but a child when Joseph was sold into Egypt. Six of the other ten sons of Jacob were children of Leah, who had, by trickery, been forced on him, and whom he did not love. The others were the children of slaves. When Joseph was quite young his peasant brothers were mature. Judah, one of these, was a man of power and influence among his brothers; he seemed hard and cruel like the rest, but when Benjamin came to a sad pass in Egypt Judah developed a warm and affectionate heart. In words of moving eloquence he offered himself as a slave in Benjamin's stead. None of the others, so far as we know, ever showed any better qualities than one might expect if the blood of their mothers reproduced their coarse qualities in their sons. Rachel was different, and it was probably through her, rather than through his acute but worldly father, that Joseph learned so early his trustful faith in God. Rachel lived a quiet life, but impressed herself strongly on her family and times, and has been a marked figure ever since. Her tomb is still a landmark at Bethlehem; and Joseph so impressed himself upon his race that he could not be forgotten. His embalmed body was car-

ried along to Palestine three long centuries later; but history leaves no record of the later life or the latter end of the others.

Does it mean anything to a lad to be a child of prayer? Jacob, with all his faults, was a sincere worshipper of God, and a man of deep affections and good, if not great, impulses. His heart went out strongly to Joseph. He sorrowed for him many days, and refused to be comforted when his death was reported by his brothers, when they sold him into Egypt and had not the courage to confess it. In his last days he said of Joseph,—“He is a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall . . . The arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob.” His low opinion of the others, (except Judah), is shown by the highly descriptive language he used in that last address.

Joseph did not probably, as a boy, think of himself as an example for others, though he was advised by his dreams that God had some great experiences in store for him. First in the candor of boyhood, and later in the frank exhibition of his faith in God’s power and his trust in his promises, he followed loyally the lines of opportunity and duty as they opened before him. He thus became,—all unknown to himself,—an example of what God can and will do by selected men when not obstructed by human self-will. It is to be inferred, however, that God has regard to quality and fitness in selecting men for important tasks. Only the finest personal gifts can be developed into the highest type of leadership, and a rare few have these. The rest of us, like the brothers of Jacob, must take our places in the ranks, and be content to follow.

One of the most easily remembered pictures of the conquest of Canaan, several hundred years later, is that of the four serious men of Joseph's tribe who carried his bones into the promised land, where they buried him at Shechem, a spot especially fitted for his resting place because it was the first place where Abraham built an altar to the Lord when he arrived from Ur of the Chaldees, and it also fell within the territory assigned to Joseph's tribe. There Abraham had first received God's promise, and there he began,—though as a wandering stranger,—his life in the land his descendants were to inherit; and near to the tomb of Joseph was also that other historical spot where Jacob had digged his well. It is still to be seen there, and still goes by his name.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. Joseph was a country boy,—the youngest, (until Benjamin, who was born much later), of a large family.
2. Until Benjamin, who was born at the death of his mother,— (“the son of my sorrow”),—Joseph was Rachel’s only child. She had longed and prayed for him so earnestly that he must have been very close to her heart.
3. The other children of Jacob were of coarser fibre, and fitted for no such experience as was reserved for Joseph. His dreams were, as we know now, visions of a true future. He himself evidently thought of them as foreshadowing future events, and repeated them, with boyish frankness, to his parents and brothers.
4. The brothers regarded this as vain-glory, and as discrediting them; and this, with their father’s favoritism, led them into such a hostile attitude as could even end in destruction.
5. Joseph said to them in Egypt—“Ye meant it for evil, but God meant it for good.”
6. Thus Jacob’s treachery to his father and brother was repeated in his own children.

7. But as Jacob, when he grew older, became a better man, so also in some degree did these wicked sons.
8. They had certain good qualities, and afterwards showed an honorable affection for their father and for Benjamin.
9. Joseph was a believer in God from his youth, and God was always with him.
10. He probably inherited many attractive personal qualities from his mother,—Rachel: certainly he was loved and trusted on every side;
11. But he also inherited much of the business capacity and perseverance of his father Jacob.
12. Why did Joseph succeed and his brothers not?
13. He had talent, intelligence and industry, and also God's guidance, which he invited, and in which he trusted. Which of these accounts most completely for his success?
14. None of these, operating through his will, took him into Egypt. That was God's direct action, overruling the evil purpose of the brethren; but his own high qualities, sustained by his faith, aided to make him great when he got there.
15. It was vital to the plan of God that provision should be made in Egypt, where irrigation means everything and drought nothing, for a supply of food for Jacob and his family when drought and famine prevailed, or his promises to Abraham might have failed. Joseph was qualified to do that, and scarcely could even an unbeliever deem it an accident that he was there when the crisis arrived, and in a position to preserve the members of that race, then few, but to become a multitude, "like sand upon the seashore."
16. So his brethren, intending evil, sold him to Egypt, but God overruled their wicked intent to accomplish his declared purpose of making the descendants of Abraham a great race.
17. We infer from this story:
 - a. That the plan,—the end to be attained,—was God's;
 - b. Neither Joseph nor his brethren foresaw the future, but God did.
 - c. The human qualities of energy, industry, and perseverance, were furnished by Joseph, but the plan and opportunity were God's.

- d. Here then were combined God's *providence* and Joseph's *assent*.
- e. The outcome was the result of God's *good gifts* to Joseph, with his constant guidance; and co-operating with these, Joseph's own earnest and intelligent labors.

18. Judah's noble speech offering himself into slavery to save his young brother Benjamin and his venerable father Jacob has few equals in literature for pathos and poetry.

19. It shows the later development in him of a high quality of manhood, in spite of his bad start, and it furnishes an example of the soundness of the Salvation Army slogan, "down, but never out."

20. The details of Joseph's history, and their outcome in saving the infant race, and locating it in isolation, with opportunity for quiet growth, if regarded as accidental are beyond belief. To intelligent people, looking for the credible things in history to bulwark their faith, it is plain that it could be nothing else than the working out of the long plan of God.

LESSON XXIV

MOSES

Read Acts 7:30-37

BACKGROUND:

AS THE time approached for the departure of the Israelites for Canaan, their future home,—known in picturesque phraseology as “the promised land,”—it must have been plain to those who looked for it and expected it that a leader of unusual power and equipment would be needed. In its nature it was an enterprise so vast as to look, from a human standpoint, quite impossible. The Israelites were of immense numbers, probably by the time of the exodus a large fraction of the population of Egypt. They had degenerated from a rural people, having somewhat the status of guests, to a body of slaves, compelled to do a great part of the industrial labor of their Egyptian masters. It was much to expect that they would be allowed to go in a body to seek another home. Viewed from our present standpoint we would certainly doubt its possibility; and if it appeared in other literature, and if the proven history of the times did not establish the fact that they did go, and did find a national home in Palestine, we might be tempted to regard the story as a parable. Conforming, however, with the verified story of other and subsequent migrations this is, in its nature, if not in its extent,—even apart from our conviction of the inspiration of scripture,—quite usual. We must be confident, however, that human wisdom could not have provided and equipped a fit and quali-

fied leader, nor even anticipated the qualities he would require. Note then how simply and yet how strangely Moses was introduced and made ready for his responsibilities. It is evident now that he must have acquired an ample education; also a knowledge of the Egyptian religions; also a training in military strategy; also a *status* in the royal court. In spite of his rank as an Egyptian prince, and his forty years of association with courtiers, and constant contact with the pagan priesthood so powerful there, he held to a confident belief in the God of Israel. He was always conscious of his blood connection with the Hebrew race. He knew quite well of the promise that Palestine should be theirs, and held a firm belief that the promise would be kept. He had also an ample acquaintance with political organization and economy. What else?—everything else which could belong to any human being charged with a great duty,—wisdom, courage, patience, firmness, patriotism. Where did Moses get all these? Where could any man get them? How could a Hebrew,—the son of a slave,—acquire a residence and *status* in the palace of Pharaoh:—how, indeed, without God? But even these account only for the man and his Egyptian training. A long period of quiet reflection and communion with God was still essential before he was fitted fully for his great enterprise; and this we must believe he found in the back of the desert, where he fled after killing the Egyptian.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. The time, 400 years, originally planned for Israel's stay in Egypt, was expiring. God had not forgotten. It was on the very anniversary day that the clock struck, and they went out. (Ex. 12:41.)

2. As the time for going out was approaching they must prepare to go; but how, and under what leadership? If a Moses was to lead them out he must be brought into existence, and suitably prepared and trained.
3. Moses came, was miraculously preserved, and by the eventful day, ("der tag"), he was amply prepared and equipped. Was this an accident; or a coincidence; or the intervention of the divine hand,—the result of a special plan?
4. As a mere infant he was taken into the very palace of Pharaoh, and there trained educationally with the care given to a prince, "in all the learning of the Egyptians."
5. He had the *status* of a prince of the royal house, and thus acquired influence and position with the Egyptian people, as well as with his own race.
6. He learned military affairs, and the command of men; also acquaintance with the Egyptian system of politics and economics; this was wrought all through his code and program; without them he could scarcely have led his people, such as they were, safely into Canaan, and constructed their constitution.
7. Having before him, in the plan of God, forty years of leadership of a great people, theretofore slaves, and the duty to prepare them for self-government, the forty years he spent in the desert after his long training in Egypt were required for that special preparation which he had not received in Egypt.
 - a. He had already the necessary education; he must next prepare to use it.
 - b. One great need was *physical*; and this he got by active work in the open.
 - c. He was also to learn the power of God; and the 90th Psalm indicates how deeply he was imbibing that in his protracted Shepherd life.
 - d. His next need must have been a conviction of his own inadequacy. Where he was said to be the "meekest" man, it must have meant the most modest. Perhaps his lack of the power of ready speech, (of which he was conscious), may have borne this in upon him.
 - e. He must have been well aware that his people would shortly have to be brought into Palestine,—although he perhaps did not expect to lead them.

- f. He probably worked out his tentative system of civil government in the quiet of his life as a shepherd.
- g. He had the power and the means of writing, and he probably prepared there its outlines, if not its details.

8. Then came his call to service. The time had arrived, and he was now fully qualified. When he saw the burning bush he probably had Aaron with him; but they must have discussed it together.
9. Then came his training by experience, in which were tested and developed his qualities of diplomacy, as well as leadership:
 - a. In his interviews with Pharaoh.
 - b. In his rebuffs by his own people.
10. Then came the march to Palestine; of which we must note these particulars:
 - a. Moses at first expected it to be short.
 - b. But for the people's lack of courage and faith it *would* have been short.
 - c. But it stretched out long enough to enable him to apply and test his system, and for his people to acquire familiarity with it.
 - d. For adequate *experience* in self-government, the time occupied in the direct journey to Canaan would have been short.
 - e. If the Israelites had fully believed in God, and confided themselves to him, it might have been long enough for both purposes.
 - f. But they were cowardly and faithless, and the elder generation could not become fit. Thus they spent another forty-year period in living under its principles, though much could only be utilized when they should fully occupy their new land.
11. So his work proceeded until all those above 20 years of age who had left Egypt had died, and a new generation succeeded, and the time arrived for taking possession.
12. Then the sad day came when Moses was permitted to see the land he could not enter, and to turn over to another the truncheon of leadership.

13. No doubt it was his saddest moment. But God did not turn away from him, or forget his labors of love. He died there, and there God buried him. As Mrs. Alexander sings:

“The Angels of God upturned the sod,
and laid the dead man there.”

14. And there is a tradition that God Himself, when He laid him in the grave, bent over and kissed him on the brow.

15. So Moses disappeared from the vision of men until he appeared with Elijah at the transfiguration of Jesus on the mountain.

LESSON XXV

RUTH

Read Ruth, Chap. I

BACKGROUND:

RUTH was the grandmother of David, and in the line of descent of Jesus Christ. Though a Moabite, and therefore of a different people, in the sense that the descendants of Ishmael and of Esau were different from those of Isaac and Jacob, yet Ruth was not altogether alien in blood, for the Moabites traced back to Lot, Abraham's nephew. That God regarded them as in close connection with, though not directly in the line of the promised blessing, is indicated by the fact that the descendants of Ishmael, of Esau, and of Lot were each divided into twelve tribes; and that the Israelites were expressly forbidden to make war upon them, or to take away their land; (See Deut. 2). Although it was not in terms so stated in God's covenant with Abraham, it seems that the promise that his descendants should constitute his "peculiar people" and set apart for his worship, was deemed by Abraham to include both male and female. At least he regarded it so great an honor that it was fitting that there should be no intermingling of races. He sent a messenger back to the old home to select a wife for Isaac from those of his own blood, and said to him, "I will make thee swear that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son from the daughters of Canaan." And Isaac sent Jacob back to the old stock for a wife, and said,—"Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan." So when

Esau, though he was not in the ancestry of Jesus, took a Hittite wife, the record is that "it was a grief of mind to Isaac and to Rebekkah."

If their successors had been as careful to construe it as Abraham and Isaac were, they might have known that the first born in each link of the succession would succeed to the promised blessing, and thus would have stressed the need of the same racial strain on both sides. That this course was not regularly followed is evidently true; and the choice of alien wives was not the sole departure, for so it also was with the express command against the worship of idols. God invites and urges, but does not compel obedience; neither does he permit selfishness or wilfulness to permanently hinder his plans, though they may and often do obstruct or delay them. Ruth then was in the true line of succession, as understood by the founder of the race.

In my own mental picture, Ruth was as beautiful of face and form as she was in spirit; and so I think she was in other heaven-born gifts of personality. She had a poetical soul, a loving heart, high integrity and a truly loyal gift of friendship. It seems to me also, in my dream of her, that she possessed a rich and tuneful voice. Only a low-pitched and melodious contralto could, I think, harmonize with that earliest recorded profession of love and honor which she spoke to Naomi. Schumann-Heinck seems to me to be, in that respect, her latest successor. No wonder that her grandson David, the sweet singer of Israel, commanded a richness of thought and language and gifts of music and of poetic fancy which have swayed the heart of all ages.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. In the midst of the period of the Judges, usually deemed a time of general anarchy,—when “everyone did that which was right in his own eyes,”—we have the curtain lifted on a different scene.
2. In the rural community of Bethlehem not only does peace and order reign, but we see evidences of a protracted *habit* of law observance.
3. The right of succession both to titles and to privileges under the Mosaic land laws was known there, and its obligations were recognized, without differences or resentments.
4. Adequate courts sat to adjudge the rights of parties, and a settled procedure, which must have been ancient, was understood and applied.
5. The Mosaic rules respecting gleanings were also well known and practiced.
6. Consideration and courtesy prevailed between employer and employee. The Master’s morning greeting was,—“The Lord be with you”; and the reapers’ response was,—“The Lord bless thee.”
7. A sweet little story of love, with its sad beginning and its happy ending, interested the whole community, and their gossip about it was kindly and not harsh.
8. It is plain that though this was in the period of the Judges, if there was then anarchy anywhere it was not everywhere, and that God’s plan for quiet industry was working out, at least in Bethlehem. So it is in many quiet places and peaceful homes of our own country, where people respect each other and their personal rights, disregarding the lawless and conscienceless deeds which go on in other places, where selfishness reigns.
9. It is said that Benjamin Franklin, while representing the new Republic of America in France, read this little tale in a distinguished company to whom it was new, and that it reached the heart below the artificial shell which prevailed there. So it does now and everywhere.

LESSON XXVI

DAVID

*Read II. Samuel 1:17-27
II. Samuel 23:1-5*

BACKGROUND:

THE very name of David has power, after all these centuries, to stir the emotions and warm the sensibilities of humanity. How many children have borne that name! How few that of Judas, or of Benedict Arnold, or Esau, or Lot, or Aaron Burr. Reflection on the reason of this may well convince us of the attractiveness as well as the value of the cultivation of the highest qualities. And yet the qualities which made David great were first of all the gift of God, and not earned by any conscious effort of his own. How far they were the outcome of the prayers and life of his grandmother, Ruth, cannot of course be known; but David himself utilized his inborn gifts, of person, of heart, and of mind, and by his own efforts made them to glorify God and to uplift humanity. Such good uses may human beings still make of strong, rich qualities they often possess which they can trace nowhere but to the good hand of God. David's time, and the condition of Israel, called for the best qualities he possessed. Kingship, among his race, was not by divine right, nor by any settled practice in a given line. Saul was the first, but the next was from a different tribe and family. There was then no such thing as a dynasty. Jonathan knew he would not inherit the kingdom, though he was the first born son of royal parents. By

the choice of God, who was the recognized head of their government, David's family line was to continue and did thereafter, but, the condition being breached, they did not reign in the kingdom of the ten tribes, who revolted on this very ground, after the death of Solomon. David, under divine guidance, won his way to the hearts of his people. It was not by conquest, or by a strong revolt, but by God's election, confirmed by the people's choice, that he became king. In addition to his high magnetic qualities and his great genius we cannot fail to remark how patiently he waited for the kingdom till the way was clear; how respectful he was to the wild and wayward and resentful Saul; how graciously he restrained and guided the savage but loyal heroes who clung to him in his adversity. How tenderly he cherished the crippled child of his dead friend Jonathan. How earnestly he repented his own misdeeds, and how frankly, and without disingenuous defences, he acknowledged them. Tempted of the devil, and falling now and then, but rising and pressing on, he lived a long and favored life, and was always, even in his sins, so profoundly penitent, so eager to be right, and so passionately devoted, that in spite of his falls he was known as the friend of God.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. Note the likeness of men to each other in all the qualities which characterize humanity, however far apart in history.
2. How can this be explained except by a common descent from a single source?
3. Whether Jew, christian, or pagan, men's moral standards, and their hopes, fears and ambitions, are so much alike that we cannot reasonably doubt a common origin.

4. The patriarchs and outstanding men of every age have still their counterparts.
5. Men differ in temperament, and especially in *point of view*,—as in their surroundings and atmosphere,—but very little in the kind of things which stir their emotions and sensibilities.
6. This is the best test of essential likeness.
7. It is for this reason that the words of Abraham, of Joseph, of Judah, of Moses, of Ruth, of David, of Luther, and the others, so stir the hearts of the present generation.
8. David was perhaps the most essentially *human* personality in the story of the bible.
9. His conduct and his aspirations,—now up and now down,—are a perfect likeness of the experience of many men now.
10. Like those of a Scotchman, his variations were those of the *impulses* and *emotions*; but there was underneath a center core which never yielded,—his heart's loyalty to God.
11. He had a constant and steady sense of *duty* and *obligation*; and around this,—like flowers,—twined rich and beautiful qualities and gifts which have kept him loved and admired in all ages.
12. He was strikingly handsome,—a rosy, blue eyed, red haired Jew,—very marked in comparison with others; brave enough to cope with wild animals and man, and strong enough to overcome them.
13. He had a brilliant mind, and reasoned logically but soundly. He built much on experience, and exhorted others to apply like tests, with confidence of attaining like results.
14. He had a fervid, poetical, imaginative spirit,—perhaps derived from his grandmother Ruth.
15. He was full of the *magnetic* quality, and had many warm and constant friends, even among those quite unlike himself.
16. Strange to say, his best qualities *died with him*, and did not appear in his sons.
17. Are indeed the best gifts of God personal and individual only? Do they skip generations, and still return?
18. Are they not inheritable? Consider in this connection the second commandment. May human obstinacy permanently thwart the divine plan?

19. We lay much stress on heredity, but some think environment the most effectual in determining character; but whether the good or evil of humanity be native or not, no doubt an atmosphere of good or evil surrounding a child in infancy has an immense influence on his character. And yet we seem to find the opposite among the experiences related in the history of the Jewish kings,—a good father, followed by a wicked son; and *vice versa*.
20. A wise commentator refers to the frequent instances of good sons of bad fathers, (such as Hezekiah), and the reverse, as indicating that neither despair nor undue assurance is justified in such cases, because the grace of God may override the ordinary human results.

LESSON XXVII

SOLOMON

*Read I. Kings 3:5-13
I. Kings 11:4-6*

BACKGROUND:

As God was the recognized head of the kingdom of Israel there was among the Jews no fixed rule of succession, for the elder or any son. God designated the successor, and no other had rights. Solomon was a late-born child. Of him it is written that when he was entering on his reign God approved his spirit and his purpose. Nathan the prophet named him to succeed David, as Samuel had anointed David, a younger son, to succeed Saul. The reason for Solomon's succession is not given. Doubtless it was based on personal fitness to rule, of which his subsequent story gives ample evidence. But for God's promise to David that there should not fail him a son to sit upon the throne of Israel it might as well have been a stranger. It is evident that God's choice was no guarantee that the downward tendency of the race would not prevail in him, nor was it so intended. Of this we have many instances. He was given his chance, and with loyal adherence to the God of his ancestors he might have maintained, for himself and his kingdom, the high point he was permitted to reach. He might if he willed. He could if he would. He invited his own fate, and the fate of his kingdom; and the conditions of persistent success were not waived, even for him. Indeed the promise of God's favor was made in terms condi-

tional on obedience (I. Kings, 9:4-6). Solomon was well aware of the unfitness of his marriage to a daughter of Egypt, in view of his own ancestry, and the fact that Jehovah was still, in essence, the head of Israel. He took her out of the house of David, and built for her a separate home, saying "My wife shall not dwell in the house of David, King of Israel, because the places are holy whereunto the ark of the Lord hath come." This much at least of his early religion remained to him. The reason of his life is explicit as to the facts, but leaves the reader to draw his inferences as to causes. It is evident that he disregarded the explicit command to erect no military organization, for he did so. He also entered into treaties with Egypt, and married the daughter of the reigning prince. Evidently his diplomacy,—of the type current around him,—was a greater influence than his loyalty to God. Yet his kingdom appeared to flourish as long as he lived. It was, however, a shell, and it burst when it came under the administration of one not so gifted. There seems evidence enough that Solomon was at heart always a real worshipper of Jehovah, but his faith was not strong enough to overbalance his worldly estimate of prudence. Doubtless he had at times sad memories of the better days when he wholly trusted God.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. When the world of human beings, originally made in God's image, but of independent will, had wandered away from Him, he prepared to show them the way back by a single method, having two aspects:
 - a. Through a self-governing people, always under divine guidance and assistance, to serve as an *object lesson*.

- b. Through the like means to serve as an *instrumentality*, to seek actively the recovery of the whole human race.
- 2. God built up a special *race*, and gave them *convincing evidences* of the advantages of following his leadership.
- 3. He gave them an isolated *country*, which could be conserved without war.
- 4. He gave them a system of government, which seemed adapted to every need, and of which he was the head.
- 5. He gave them a religion, which filled their earthly, as well as their spiritual nature, and was simple and practicable.
- 6. If they had preserved and protected what God gave them they could have been a *shining example*, convincing even to the heathen.
- 7. No one ever had so good a chance as Solomon, who had every need met, and every want supplied, to be an *illustration of God's goodness and power*.
- 8. He had *peace*, without need for war;
He had *wisdom* beyond comparison;
He had *riches* nowhere equalled;
He had the *express promise* of God's guidance.
- 9. Yet his deterioration in old age was as remarkable as his father's advance.
- 10. His downward career was marked by all these features:
 - a. He accumulated armies and equipment for war, and thus tempted himself to expand, by conquest, and by *threat of conquest*.
 - b. He lost his loyalty to God by choosing to live in an atmosphere of paganism.
 - c. He forgot the main object of God in creating that kingdom—to conserve the knowledge of one God, and win others to that faith.
- 11. In all these things he *disobeyed* express commands.
- 12. If he continued to believe in God he must have known that his kingdom thus would have no reason for continued existence.
- 13. He did not train his family in faith and loyalty to God, but led them himself in an atmosphere of paganism and self indulgence.

14. What then could be expected other than the drifting away under a king so weak and also so self assured as Rehoboam?
15. The first fatal error of Solomon seems to have been the choice of an Egyptian wife, who had been taught to *worship* the very beasts the Israelites were required to *sacrifice*.
16. She would of course demand another and conflicting ritual, and Solomon thus *created* the condition under which he could not worship with a whole heart the one God who was the head of his race.
17. God has a program fitted to man's needs, and life in accordance with that program may be full of peace and assurance. It is not arbitrary, and the ill results of departure from it are not punishments for errors, but the inevitable results of improper living; as if, for example, a lily or a palm, adapted to grow in a soft atmosphere, should endeavor to live the outdoor life of the northern pine. Not even God's love for David could save his son when he set his stubborn will against the course of those beautiful laws under which man was made to thrive,—body and spirit.

LESSON XXVIII

DANIEL

Read from Daniel

BACKGROUND:

PROBABLY every bible teacher is aware that the verity of Daniel,—book and person,—is questioned, on critical grounds. Such differences are not uncommon, but debate on these grounds in the class I deem unwise. For myself, having read much on the subject, I deem the argument wholly unconvincing, and in my class, as here, consider the story of Daniel as authentic as that of Joseph.

The seventy years of deportation and exile had long been foretold, and it was evident the time was approaching. It was to begin, and also was to end. The Israelitish race was to be exiled for a season, but was neither to be enslaved nor destroyed. The Messiah was still to come, and at least until that event its hour would not strike. But Babylon was wholly pagan, and its king was cruel. As in the time of Joseph it was needful that an agency should be established having influence in high circles to guarantee the Israelites a kindly reception when they went down in multitudes; and also one or more in high place and favor, who should make the way easy when the exile should end, so that they might be permitted and also encouraged to return. So Daniel, who was of a princely household, was transported long enough in advance to gain an adequate status in the king's household, and to hold it firmly to the end; and bravely and helpfully did he perform both missions.

It is not God's way, it seems, to endow all men alike; nor, in a great emergency, to load on an unfit man the duties or responsibilities of a highly qualified person. On the contrary, experience shows that he provides for each such case a qualified person. Daniel was a child of the nobility, but that did not qualify him. It did, however, give him the *entree* into the court of Babylon, where his work was to be done. His wisdom was a special endowment,—a gift of God,—like that of Joseph and Moses. To this was added a loyal spirit, great courage, confidence in God's guidance, and a personality attractive and pleasant, to be described only by the modern term "magnetic." Those who are inclined to stress lightly fine manners and striking appearance as elements of usefulness might learn valuable lessons from Daniel. The imaginative pictures of Daniel generally represent him as stern and severe,—much like the high pharisees of Christ's time; but his success in holding the high regard of those from time to time in power, and his magnetic influence on others in his young manhood, indicate quite otherwise. Is there no real artist who can depict a man very great, and very firm, and yet very gracious?

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. We find, in Israelitish history, that when some great emergency is approaching, a person fitted to deal with it is prepared in advance.
2. Joseph was an example; and Moses; and Esther; and Daniel. In modern times Calvin, Luther, Cromwell, Washington, Lincoln, Moody.
3. Two of such emergencies were impending in Daniel's time:—the captivity, to last seventy years,—and the return, at the end of that time.

4. Daniel and his three friends were brought to Babylon early, and became the favored and trusted friends of the king; and such was the condition when the Israelitish captives came swarming down.
5. At the end Cyrus, though a pagan, was to send them back. Isaiah 45:1; Jer. 25:12; 2 Chr. 36:22. When the time came, and Cyrus became king, he found Daniel in high position and great regard.
6. Daniel, like Joseph and Moses and Esther, had the high qualities which fitted him to be the champion of his people in a pagan court.
7. Were these accidental, or did God deliberately purpose them, so that his people should not be too hardly dealt with, and should not become permanent slaves?
8. This could not have been more carefully carried out, and more successful, if God had in fact forever known them, and prepared for them in advance.
9. Daniel was attractive, wise, ingenuous, loyal and persevering. He became skilled in magic, and also a reliable interpreter of dreams, like Joseph.
10. By his constancy and his ability he commended his religion and his God to these pagan courtiers, and obtained consideration for his people, both with Nebuchadnezzar and with Cyrus.
11. Because he was fit, and also loyal and true, God was always evidently with him, and helped him into favor with the king.
12. Note, in studying the story of Daniel, and the captivity of Israel, the significance of the period of seventy years, for which, *and no longer*, it was to last; i.e.,
 - a. Israel had been required by the Mosaic law to give the land a sabbath of rest every seventh year: (Lev. 25:3, 4, 5; Lev. 26:33, 34, 35; 2 Chr. 36:21).
 - b. These had not been observed; and God said the land should lie idle and fallow until this was rectified in full.
 - c. This was the basis of the seventy-year period, as shown by the references.
 - d. Manifestly the point of this would be lost if, when the time expired, it was permitted to go unnoticed.
 - e. This carried historically into the time of Cyrus, and this required that by some means Cyrus might be led to act.

- f. Daniel knew this, and he himself states that it was "by studying the books" that the culmination of that period was found to be at hand.
- g. If Cyrus had indeed sufficient regard for Daniel, or for his religion, to make such a plan, and knowledge sufficient to carry it out, the details in Daniel are credible.
- h. If this is doubted or rejected, then the historicity not only of Daniel, but also of the other books referring to it, must fall together.
- i. Jeremiah looked for such a termination of the period of exile and bought a piece of land in Judea on the faith of it; (Jer. 32).

13. To those who believe in God as He is defined in the Westminster catechism the events of Daniel are not incredible; and while we do not doubt the propriety of full investigation, we cannot be blamed for urging that such inquiries should be free from the adverse prejudgment which we sometimes find among the overconfident critics, who make the rejection of this book a test of scholarship, but who we fear are especially reluctant, if not hostile, to any story of superhuman power.

14. Even to such, however, the story, regarded as an invention of a later day, can well illustrate, if it does not prove, the overruling and superintending grace of God; for the story of the conquest of Israel, and the long captivity, and the later reinstatement of the children of Israel by pagan kings, contain every spiritual element taught in this book.

15. If God had adequate knowledge and power, as all his children believe, the miracles recorded might have occurred, even if historically they did not; and thus there would remain only its prophecies, not yet fulfilled, nor clearly understood, which, even if uttered by another servant of God, by another name, may yet be found a correct forecast of human and divine events.

The New Testament

GROUP D

A PICTURE gallery of the portraits of a few great ones of the new dispensation, hanging in a new and brighter light; the haze of prophecy, pierced by flashes of illumination from its fulfilments, from the Annunciation by Gabriel to the bursting of the tomb at Easter.

LESSON

XXIX. LUKE

XXX. MARY

XXXI. JOHN THE BAPTIST

XXXII. LAZARUS

XXXIII. ZACCHEUS

XXXIV. DORCAS

XXXV. STEPHEN

XXXVI. PHILIP

LESSON XXIX

LUKE

Read Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-3, 4:14

BACKGROUND:

A BIOGRAPHER may or may not have been a friend or even contemporary of the subject of his book. Matthew and John were disciples. Mark was the mouthpiece of Peter. But there is nothing to indicate that Luke had any relation to Jesus in the flesh. Certainly the most outstanding distinctive features of his biography,—the virgin birth of Jesus and the annunciation to Mary,—could as well have been communicated to a stranger. Directly or indirectly, this could only have originated with Mary. From this and other circumstances it appears that Luke was probably an intimate friend, either of Mary or of those who were altogether in her confidence. Luke was also intimate with Paul, and doubtless had Paul's point of view as to those elements and features which might usefully be incorporated in a life of Christ. Some have remarked, in hesitating to accept the verity of the virgin birth, that Paul did not mention it. It seems to me, however, that in view of the long intimacy between them, Paul must have been aware that Luke was stressing it as an important fact. If Paul doubted it, it seems remarkable that he should not have either influenced its omission, or modified the positive statement.

The thought is not new to us that any man is most sure to see, among complex events, the things he is most accustomed to think about. What is most certain, in a

mixed assembly, to attract the eye of a physician? What is most likely, in the comings and goings of humanity, to interest a lawyer? Perhaps too often the physician looks on the afflictions of the world coldly, regarding the broken man as an exhibit, and lays more stress on his disease than on his heartache. Such is perhaps the training of his profession. But Luke was not so, and thank God many physicians are not. Luke was to Paul the "beloved physician." He must have had also highly developed the missionary spirit, for he endured so much, and clung to it so long. Perhaps a mere observer or recorder of events may live a less impressive and imposing life than he whose exploits he records, but what would the world do or be without him. So many events of life are full of meaning and inspiration that it would be a calamity to have them lose themselves in distance. Luke's work was, in its way, as important as Paul's, for it helps to keep Paul's work alive.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. Luke's function was not alone his authorship of a life of Christ. He also wrote the missionary labors of Acts. We know of no other writing of his, although he lived approximately to the time of Paul's death. Perhaps, like other authors, he left important works in notes which never saw the light.
2. It is evident that he was not persistent in his medical practice, though a physician and a scholar, for he travelled a considerable time with Paul, and was with him in Rome.
3. It does not appear that he was either a preaching or teaching missionary, like Paul, or Apollos, or Barnabas.
4. Probably his main service to the early church, aside from his historical work, was his warm friendliness and encouragement to those on whom the great burden of the new church was falling.
5. As Moses needed Aaron and Hur to perform the mere physical service of holding up his hands, so now, as well as in Luke's

time, some of the most efficient friends of the church are inconspicuous people, who are not eager to be in the lime light.

6. A man whose ability and standing command general esteem may influence many in the interest of a cause by his quiet support, though he do nothing spectacular.
7. Many people have acquired a great reputation founded on a single conspicuous public service,—in the field of religion, charity, or statesmanship; but many who well deserve it have none.
8. “Full many a rose is born to blush unseen,” yet it maintains its worth both by its beauty and its perfume, and the long remembrance of its sweetness.
9. Many a missionary, of ample power, hides himself in some quiet field where he is loving and beloved, and where God sees to it that his labors are not lost when the harvest comes.

LESSON XXX

MARY

Read from Luke i

BACKGROUND:

WHEN the messiah, predicted from the earliest recorded history of humanity, should arrive, it is plain that his chief function would be to restore humanity to its primary position or condition, or put it on the way to such a recovery. Since even after that should occur, if done by force or external pressure, man's will would be still uncontrolled and his faculties imperfect, his turn upwards must be voluntary. Therefore the messiah's influence must be exerted by a constraining motive, and by common consent love is the most powerful. This involves approval and confidence. Since the coming of Jesus at least it is plain that it calls for human qualities developed to their highest perfection; "I will *draw* all men unto me", said Jesus. Even eternal *life* is not compulsory, though eternal existence may be. So God in his wisdom sent Jesus in the flesh, to live the life of humanity. He must therefore begin with the long, slow dependence of an infant, and experience first the protection and care of a mother, and then the growing independence of adolescence and of manhood. The fitness of Mary to mother the infant messiah has never been questioned. Indeed to many her own character has led to the extension to her also of the worship primarily offered to her son.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. Mary, in her qualities and her descent, conformed to the predictions of the prophets, and also to the hints contained in the words of the herald angel, and also to the apprehension of God's own servants who were on earth when he came.
2. There is no indication that Mary had about her on earth any group of courtiers, or worshipping inferiors, although the circumstances of Jesus' birth must have been known in the neighborhood.
3. Where did he get the profound knowledge of the Jewish scriptures from which he so often quoted, either in the Greek, or in the tongue in which they were first written?
4. His comprehension was doubtless divine, but his constant reading and study must have been under tutelage.
5. Who taught him in infancy the polite bearing and the courteous speech which won him increasing favor with men, as well as with God.
6. Mary's life, after the death of Joseph, must have been sad, for there were dissensions. Jesus' brothers did not believe in his messianic character and functions until after his resurrection, although it is evident that they knew of nothing inconsistent with this in his personal character and bearing.
7. Yet Mary knew beforehand both his divine quality and his messianic function and duties, and perhaps much of what would humanly befall him.
8. She could not have been ever in doubt about his divine origin and nature.
9. She was among those who surrounded his cross when he died, and who walked and talked with him after his resurrection.
10. Though the disciples with whom he walked to Emmaus had given up hope when he died, it is not possible that she, his mother, should have even then considered his mission a failure, for of this she had been warned in advance.
11. After his ascension her home was among those who still worshipped him, and she must have been conscious that her own death would be a mere translation.

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12. Nothing had been lacking to convince her of his divine origin, divine quality, and divine kingship in glory. He was announced to her by an angel; a procession of angels, with superb music, accompanied him when he arrived; angels sat by his tomb when he arose; angels gave his last message to his disciples at his ascension, and angels announced the program for his return.

LESSON XXXI

JOHN THE BAPTIST

Read Luke 1:5-17; 67-80

BACKGROUND:

SINCE time is nothing to God, and since the great events of his plans for humanity are wrought out from long beginnings, it is to be expected that when the climax of all is impending, and the time is approaching for the fulfilment of messianic prophecy, indications of it would appear. These, if unusual, would concentrate attention on the event, so that when it arrives it makes a double impression. Thus Shakespeare says of the assassination of Caesar, that on the night before his death "men all in fire walked up and down the street; the sheeted dead did squeak and gibber in the streets of Rome, and a lion walked in the public places." It is interesting to observe that after the period of the last books of the Old Testament, speaking canonically, a period of quiescence comparable to night occurred, in which direct communication between God and man was suspended. But as in nature night does not stay growth, so during that prolonged period events in secular history occurred, in the succession of which the world was prepared for the new revolution, so that when Christ came, "in the fulness of time," communication by a known language had, chiefly as the result of Alexander's conquests, become practicable; remote places were connected by the substantial Roman roads; the pagan religions had ceased to satisfy; learning had spread; and in many other ways the time was ripe. Then the time

arrived; the clock struck, and the herald of the new dispensation appeared. "Behold, I will send my messenger"; "The sun of righteousness will arise"; "I will send you Elijah," said Malachi. When John was born his father said of him,—"the day spring from on high (the dawn) hath visited us." And John said of himself that he came, pursuant to prophecy, "to make straight in the desert a highway for our God." So John, though not the messiah, was his herald and messenger, to preach that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. It was a great function, and John was no accident. The darkness which had fallen four hundred years earlier began to be dispelled. The spring of the day began to brighten the sky, and the long promised "Sun of Righteousness" arose, with healing in his wings.

The coming and work of John was no light thing, but he withdrew himself into the shadows when a greater than he arrived. He said,—as one might suppose the morning star to say when the sun rises,—"he must increase, but I must decrease." Of John himself Jesus said, "He was a burning and a shining light."

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. It is evident from what occurred afterwards that those Jews who really hoped for a messiah expected him to head a revolt against Rome.
2. The thing of all things most unlikely to them was that he would seek only to found a spiritual kingdom, membership in which would be voluntary, and would include the gentiles.
3. This probably accounts for the lack of faith in Jesus which is conspicuous in his own brothers, and in Nicodemus, and other earnest Jews. One of these, probably expressing the judgment of many, said,—"Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

4. The expectation of a military,—or at least a militant,—messiah is caught and illustrated by Lew Wallace, where he describes in *Ben Hur* the gathering of military forces to seat Jesus on the throne.
5. John must have drawn from his mother Elizabeth, and perhaps from Mary, his aunt, the truth about Jesus, and he believed profoundly in his true messiahship. His own sad mind once raised doubts, in a time of great distress, when events seemed to him to move slowly, but he submitted them to Jesus, and got a conclusive answer.
6. He must also have known of Jesus' correspondence with the prophecies, especially those mentioned by Matthew.
7. So he once called him the Lamb of God,—“who taketh away the sins of the world.” This was an averment that he conformed to the prophecies.
8. John therefore was a fit “forerunner,” to prepare the hearts of the people for the true function of the messiah, and to spiritualize the revolution he was to initiate.
9. Here again there could have been no accident.
10. His preaching was therefore an announcement,—as a herald,—and also an exhortation as a preacher,—to prepare for the spiritual mission of Jesus.
11. John did not invite military preparation,—to put Jesus on the throne of Israel,—but urged a change of heart; “repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”
12. Though the messiah was to come by and through the Jews, yet his errand was to save the whole world of humanity, and restore it to the likeness of God.
13. So John’s message of repentance was alike to all,—to the soldiers of Rome and to the subject Jews,—to “bring forth fruits meet for repentance.”
14. As the sun in the heaven shines on the just and the unjust so the “sun of righteousness” was to bring in a new day for the whole race of man, of which John and his message were the dawn,—“the Day-Spring.”

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15. If this were any but God's work it could not be expected to conform so perfectly both to its purpose and to its prophecies.
16. So both John's mission and his message harmonize with the prophecies concerning him and his functions, and are confirmed by the words of Jesus himself,—“ He was a burning and a shining light.”

LESSON XXXII

LAZARUS

Read John 11:14, 11:21-45

BACKGROUND:

MOST of Christ's miracles had two main objects,—viz., to help human beings in distress, and to show by unanswerable evidence his superhuman authority. A few, such as his invitation to Peter to walk on the water, his own appearance to the boatmen in like manner, and turning the water to wine, were chiefly, if not wholly, evidentiary. These were to John so convincing that the miracles he recited were, as he says, selected to prove that Jesus was the son of God. The raising of the centurion's daughter, of the son of the widow of Nain, and of Lazarus, and the confirmation of like authority by his own resurrection, proved, among other things, that while death separates the spirit from the body it does not necessarily extinguish either, although the mortal elements of the body unless artificially preserved begin quickly to fade away. It was for this reason that the ancient Egyptians embalmed the body, that it might be always ready for reunion with the spirit. The spirit—the *same* spirit—is subject to recall, and retains its personal characteristics. Jesus' own resurrection differs from the others in this,—that *they* were afterwards, as before, in all respects human, and must, in the course of nature, again suffer death; not so in his own case. But these distinctions are no part of our present subject. As to Lazarus' subsequent history, we have little except tradition to judge by, but it is evident

that to his sisters and acquaintances he was the same personality as before. His experience must have taught him some startling, as well as some revealing things. Tradition is that he never smiled again. Perhaps as in Paul's case, he could never bring himself to relate or discuss his four days' experience of a different world. He knew, at least, that "It is not all of life to live, nor all of death to die." Yet there are many people whose chief conviction it is that the great object of earthly endeavor is to prolong life, with all its human cares and frailties.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. Lazarus was probably a good brother, but there is nothing in the record to show that his death left the world noticeably poorer.
2. The same may be said of the son of the widow of Nain. If therefore it had been the object of Jesus to restore useful lives, it is likely he would have raised up John the Baptist instead.
3. The main purpose evidently was to convince doubters of his divine nature and authority. As Jesus himself said of Lazarus' sickness, "that the son of God may be glorified thereby."
4. The raising of Lazarus occurred at a time when Jerusalem was filled with non-resident Jews, many of whom were looking and hoping for the advent of the messiah.
5. It occurred so short a time before the death of Jesus himself that it may have been intended, or at least timed, partly to make it easier to believe in his own physical resurrection. They who had seen Lazarus afterwards knew it was not impossible for the dead to rise.
6. The rapid growth of the body of believers occurred after Jesus' resurrection, but it is probable that this and other startling miracles occurring beforehand brought in, or at least aided to bring in afterward, many of those "who were being saved."
7. If this view of the main purpose of the raising of Lazarus is correct, the question of whether and why such miracles do not now occur is answered.

8. The instances of raising people from the dead are so few that it is evident Jesus did not teach that it is desirable or helpful that men should not die; or that the dead should, for their own sake or the sake of the world, be restored to life.
9. The restoration of the Lord himself, with no future death in the offing, proves that Jesus believed the future life to be better than this.
10. Since this is so, any system of theology stressing the desirability of prolonging or reinstating human life must be erroneous.
11. Lazarus had to die again; indeed he must do so to be again a companion of his Lord. Thus his resurrection by a miracle must have had a better reason than his own advantage, or the desires of his sisters.
12. One would suppose that the resurrection of one who had been dead four days,—so that the miracle was beyond dispute,—would convince every observer of the divine authority of Jesus. Why then did not all the Jews flock to his feet?
13. This is answered by the parable of Dives and the beggar, which illustrates the conviction of Jesus that even a miracle of resurrection would not convince the unwilling. He quotes Abraham as saying,—“If they believe not Moses and the prophets neither will they be converted though one rose from the dead.”
14. So even now few if any are converted by an appeal to the intellect. It is the heart which accepts God. The intellect approves and confirms; and to both of these functions the miracles of healing are addressed.

LESSON XXXIII

ZACCHEUS

Read Luke 19:2-10

BACKGROUND:

A VERY little man is at a disadvantage everywhere, and of course he is conscious of it. Such was Isaac Watts, who was so small that he was the butt of his acquaintances. In defense he wrote his hymn:

“Were I so tall to reach the pole
Or grasp the ocean with my span,
I must be measured by my soul,
The mind’s the standard of the man.”

Zaccheus perhaps was driven by his very physical littleness to build up by special effort a fortune which might attract the attention his person could not. He therefore bought the right to tax his territory, and while he made his profits he incurred the dislike of his countrymen, who regarded him as leagued with Rome against them. But like many another small man he had in his bosom not only great capacity but great hopes and aspirations which he did not reveal. Perhaps after his interview with Jesus he became his follower. Perhaps he was among the three thousand on whom the blessing fell at Pentecost.

We have no authentic picture of Jesus. His Jewish brethren understood the second commandment to forbid paintings or statues of humanity, and so there was in his land and time no art as we know it. Yet most of us probably have,—perhaps unconsciously,—in our own

minds some picture of him which is developed out of our personal grasp of those qualities which we feel the most. Many artists have given us their impressions, and these affect us differently. Personally, to me the best is the picture by Hoffman of Jesus and the rich young man. The intensity of the longing in his deep eyes is the greatest thing I know in such a picture. When that Jesus stood under the tree into which Lazarus had climbed, and turned those profound eyes on the little man clinging there,—guilty but aspiring,—and said in that quiet but melodious and appealing voice,—“Zaccheus, come down, for today I must abide at thy house,” the little man was filled not only with pride and happiness but also with a deep desire to put his best self foremost, and as soon as politeness would permit he said, possibly to correct a supposed error, perhaps by way of a new resolution, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor.”

What difference does it make to God how little a man is esteemed on earth. Kings and barons, having little enough to commend them to their maker, used to build great cathedrals and monasteries, partly to buy God’s favor, but partly to get recognition from men. Absalom built his tomb, which still stands, but it earned him no more regard than his character justified. But Jesus can apprehend the longings of a disappointed human being, and, if he have faith, will give him peace. Such was, we think, Zaccheus, and he is an example for many a man who has sought friends in vain.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. The publican held a Roman commission, and with it a power to oppress which was deeply resented.

2. Zaccheus was a lonely man. Probably he had few if any friends among his people, and nearly all Jews were held in small regard by the Romans.
3. Yet he was human, and kindly, and endeavored to be just. Doubtless he longed for friendship for his own sake.
4. Probably he had heard the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. Perhaps he had heard that among the disciples of Jesus was Matthew, a publican. Probably he said to himself, "Here at least I will be judged on my merits."
5. Perhaps it was mere curiosity which led him to climb a tree that day, but more likely it was partly hope and strong desire.
6. So when Jesus addressed him he was quite ready to respond.
7. It is even likely that his heart cried out to Jesus though his lips were silent. If so, Jesus' address to him was the second part of a conversation, and not the first.
8. Jesus' very presence, without a word of rebuke, awakened in him a sense of unworthiness, and a new resolve.
9. This is indicated by the fact that his first words were in the nature of a defense; with this he began the conversation.
10. Doubtless these very words would have been spoken, if any opportunity there were, in answer to the slurs of his countrymen.
11. To Jesus, however, he not only defended his past practice, which he had tried to make both just and liberal, but announced a new resolve and made a new promise to do even better for the future.
12. So for the longing soul, and the secretive personality, Jesus not only opens a closed heart and mouth, but stirs anew a dormant will.

LESSON XXXIV

DORCAS

Read Acts 9:36-42

BACKGROUND:

THE center of the new organization of believers in Christ, known then as "the way," was at Jerusalem, and it is a surprise to find that, without any recorded effort, groups of christian believers were already to be found in the smaller and more remote places. Lydda, where Dorcas lived, was near to Joppa, but, with the limited means of transportation, remote from Jerusalem. It is believed by many that Philip had already been working there, teaching and bearing witness, and that the group of christians, including Dorcas, was the result of those labors. Dorcas, to judge by her name, was a Grecian or Hellenistic disciple, and perhaps for that reason Philip had especial influence with her.

However this may be, the group of believers there was evidently important enough to command the attention of Peter himself. Dorcas had died, and the community mourned. She had not apparently been a teacher or a leader, but only an industrious, gracious and liberal worker among the needy. Her work would now be designated perhaps as "social service." Evidently however her spirit of helpfulness was inspired by her christian faith, for Peter included her among those with and for whom he prayed,—full of faith as well as good works. This is regarded as an instance of the appropriateness of joining these two virtues together, and of

these, as of marriage, it may be said—"What God hath joined together let not man put asunder."

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. If the extension of Christ's kingdom in the world is, since his ascension, the function of the Holy Spirit, it ought not to surprise us that his work is sometimes begun without apparent human intervention.
2. Missionaries of the present day have occasional instances of like kind, occurring, for example, where groups of believers are found in pagan communities, awaiting the aid of the missionary.
3. Sometimes the only known cause has been a few leaves of the scriptures, or the report of a travelled villager from a neighboring center of christian work.
4. Who sent Livingston to Africa, or Caton to the South Sea Islands, or Paul to Europe?
5. However it originated, it is plain that Peter found believers even in Lydda.
6. And he found, in the nature of things, that Dorcas and the others coupled faith and works.
7. James did not discover for the first time, nor did he alone know, that "faith without works is dead."
8. Dorcas reached people's hearts by her kindly aid, and thus her cheerful sacrifices grew into a sufficient influence to lead them with her to the Master, who had himself said, "Take my yoke upon you—and ye shall have rest."
9. Her kindness was not merely the distribution of superfluous wealth, but articles of daily need, made with her own hands.
10. The kingdom of God is not propagated very largely by argument, but by reaching and touching the emotions, and Dorcas found it so.

LESSON XXXV

STEPHEN

Read Acts 6:8-15, 7:54-60

BACKGROUND:

THE Jews were, at the time of Christ, widely scattered over the occupied world. They retained to a remarkable degree their attachment to their own religion, and came in great numbers to the important religious feasts at Jerusalem. Many were there at the time of the crucifixion and the events following, and no small number were convinced that the messiah so long expected had in fact arrived. How largely this contributed to the great awakening of Pentecost, and the rapid growth of the christian church afterward, cannot of course be told. It is clear however that the so-called "Grecians" were among the influential christians in substantial force. Among these were Stephen, Philip, and probably Apollos, Aquila and Priscilla. Stephen's martyrdom was doubtless an event of great significance, and must have advanced and not retarded the church's growth. It gave convincing support to the slogan formulated later that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." It is difficult to judge convincingly what type of man has the greatest influence. A man filled, as Stephen was, with faith and power, though not in all respects fitted for membership in the rotary club, is frequently attractive by means of his sincerity and constancy. Stephen was not the only disciple who was spiritually gifted, even with the power to perform miracles, but he probably impressed greatly the stren-

uous and acute Paul, who stood by and held the clothes of the active "witnesses" who stoned Stephen to death. What God's complete plans for Stephen were we cannot know, but if his spirit and his faith, and the assurance with which he saw Jesus waiting to welcome him when he died of his wounds, opened the heart of Paul to see and apprehend his Lord when he received his own revelation, Stephen would himself deem his busy life and painful death amply rewarded. We do not know positively from Paul's writings that he considered this a contributing cause, but he confessed this to God in a vision as one of his greatest sins; and probably he could never forget the glory he saw on Stephen's face when he cried out "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," and fell asleep.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. The members of the early church,—even the leaders,—were of varied race and type, even as they are now.
2. Jesus and his teachings and invitations were then, as now, adapted to all humanity and all conditions.
3. Strange that in spite of wide differences the needs of all human beings are so much alike.
4. The bodily needs, during life, are much alike, and the daily anxieties are the same.
5. The heart needs are not very different; we all want friends and friendships, sympathy in sorrow, and comfort in trouble.
6. If Jesus could supply, or show us where to find, satisfaction of these only, all races and ages of people would need him.
7. But further human life is short, and the query what comes after is a burning and anxious one everywhere.
8. The death of friends, and the profound mystery of the void into which the mourners look, comes everywhere. Shall we see our friends again? If so when and where? In every type of humanity these questions arise.

9. They are the same in all languages, and wherever men live.
10. So the church of God is mixed and varied, and yet all have the same reasons for loyalty to its head. There is an analogy in the words of the familiar song,—“Each heart recalled a different name, but all sang Annie Laurie.”
11. But even those who trust their fate to this conviction differ greatly in temperament, training, and in depth of apprehension and angle of vision.
12. The Palestinian Jews of the age of Stephen who accepted Jesus as the messiah, and those who had long lived in gentile surroundings, had differing views about the effect of his coming, and its revolutionary aspects.
13. The Hebrew Jews were rigid, hidebound and full of prejudices in matters both great and small.
14. The Greeks, of whom Stephen was one, though racially Jews, had acquired the Grecian flexibility of thought, and were emotional, poetical, spiritual, and full of imagination; and they had little of the Hebrew tie of precedent, and the long habit of technical thinking.
15. Note, for example, the wide differences between Paul and Stephen, mentally and temperamentally.
16. Stephen was full of enthusiasms, whereas Paul was distinguished for logic and analysis. But both were stoned, and both proved their faith by their sacrifices, even unto death.
17. What are we of the present church to do with these differing types? Shall the strongest eject or reject the others?
18. Though Paul was deeply logical and Stephen highly emotional it was probably Stephen’s willing surrender of his life for his faith, and his realistic vision of Christ which made Paul so easily susceptible when he had a similar vision himself.

LESSON XXXVI

PHILIP

Read Acts 8:5-13, 8:26-39

BACKGROUND:

HERE were two of that name among the active followers of Jesus. One was a disciple,—the other evidently a resident alien. The name indicates that each was a “Grecian,”—meaning one who, though racially and by religion a Jew, was of a family raised and trained among the colonial Jews,—called sometimes “the Dispersion,”—who spent some all and some a part of their lives, in other countries than Palestine, and whose most familiar language and literature were Greek. Many groups or colonies of Jews were scattered over the known world. They returned in multitudes to Jerusalem at the times of the great religious feasts, and many were there at the time of Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection. Doubtless it was Philip the disciple who was approached by those “Greeks” who desired to see Jesus; but it is Philip known as “the Evangelist” of whom we are now studying.

Perhaps the difference of education, temperament, personal attractiveness, and other social qualities, was as great or greater among the twelve disciples, as well as among those who swarmed into the company of believers after the resurrection, than it would be in any similar group now. If we have been overlooking this, let us pause a moment now to compare Judas and John, or Peter and Thomas. We must not be surprised, then, in thinking of Philip the evangelist, who was chosen a

deacon, and other prominent christians, to find each markedly individual. Evidently Philip the disciple found,—as one trained in Greek literature well might, trouble in apprehending the personality of God, and by his question brought out the strong assurance that Jesus himself was God in the flesh, made carnal for the very reason that God, being a spirit, was invisible.

Philip the evangelist, to whom our lesson relates, was one of the seven deacons, all Grecians, appointed to administer the benevolences of the new church. He had four daughters, and all were active missionaries of the new dispensation. He had different characteristics from Philip the disciple, though of the same mental attitude. He began a highly successful work in Samaria, along Philistia to Caesarea,—probably also in Joppa. It seems likely that Dorcas was converted to christianity by his or their means. But the outstanding individual act of Philip's ministry was the conversion of the eunuch from Ethiopia. That has in it more lessons of value to us who are of the gentiles, and perhaps for that reason is especially stressed in preaching and teaching. It seems plain that the early church was greatly enriched by the more emotional and tractable Grecians. The Palestinian Jews,—both those who accepted the new departure and those who did not,—were rigidly loyal, not only to their faith, as they viewed it, but also to the scriptures in the original hebrew. Many of them sacrificed their lives and property for their faith, but they found it hard to concede anything to a different view. The conservatives among them took the lives of many of those who accepted a different climax to their faith, as they had taken that of Jesus, regarding them as blasphemous. Happily then and ever since the religion of Jesus has

proved itself to be fitted to every temperament and racial characteristic; and it is this which has made it a world religion.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. Philip's obedience to the divine direction to go south toward Gaza was prompt and immediate. The African eunuch to whom the tale relates was constantly moving south, and the opportunity to meet him would have been lost by even a short delay.
2. The eunuch was treasurer of the Sudan, and the religious future of his people was probably dependent on his conversion.
3. He had somehow become a believer in the God of Israel, and made this very long journey to attend an important feast of Jerusalem.
4. Perhaps he got his first light on the worship of one God at his African home, from a Jewish merchant, trading for ivory in the Sudan.
5. But for Philip he would have returned to his own country a Jew in faith, and not a christian.
6. Thus the history of a people may depend, in God's providence, on the prompt and adequate service of an individual. Much may be and has been made or lost by the seizure of such an opportunity.
7. We gentiles may owe our knowledge of christianity to Paul's prompt obedience to his vision of the man from Macedonia.
8. Any of us may have much to answer for by reason of the neglect, or the mere postponement, of a golden opportunity.
9. Is it then an accident, by which people may gain or lose so important an advantage? What is an accident?
10. Do we not at times blame God for some condition,—like the long centuries of darkness in Africa,—whereas the explanation may be that some human being, having power to do his duty or refuse, has failed. He may have repented and been forgiven, and yet the marks of his temporary disloyalty may remain on a whole race,—even for centuries.

11. Philip's interview with the eunuch and its results have given rise to much disputation in the church, chiefly as to the divinely authorized method of baptism, but this discussion is not appropriate here.
12. The remarkable thing, however, is that the eunuch's conversion so quickly followed the evidence of the fulfilment of an ancient prophecy.
13. A similar result followed the talk of Jesus with the two on the way to Emmaus, where he "opened to them the scriptures." They said—"did not our hearts burn within us?"
14. And this is perhaps the strongest impression made by the biography of Matthew, where the main events are connected up with the familiar prophecies, so long awaiting fulfilment.
15. Is it not true yet that the same method,—"it must needs be"—is more convincing to the slow mind than either argumentation or emotional appeal?
16. To the convinced christian who finds no difficulty in believing that God had long planned the coming of Jesus, and could, if he would, have revealed enough of it to his faithful servants to enable them to picture it, and recognize its details, the connection of the event with the prophecy is the crowning proof of verity.

The New Testament

GROUP E

THE explicit teachings of Jesus; comprising certain of his announced principles, and also illustrations by his acts and miracles.

LESSON

- XXXVII. THE NEED OF THE WORLD FOR GOD
- XXXVIII. THE BIBLE AND ITS USES
- XXXIX. TEN COMMANDMENTS
- XL. THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT;—ITS SOCIAL SIDE
- XLI. BLESSED ARE YE IF: A PHILOSOPHY
- XLII. BLESSED ARE YE IF: AN ASSURANCE
- XLIII. JUDGING BY FRUITS
- XLIV. A PRESCRIPTION FOR THE CURE OF SOULS
- XLV. ONLY A FEW SICK FOLK
- XLVI. GOD'S CARE FOR HIS CREATURES
- XLVII. THE PARADOXES OF THE NEW KINGDOM
- XLVIII. THE FAITH OF THE CENTURION
- XLIX. THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS
 - L. THE GOOD SAMARITAN
 - LI. THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS
 - LII. FAITH EVIDENCED BY WORKS
 - LIII. FAITH PLUS WORKS
 - LIV. THE PRACTICAL USES OF FAITH
 - LV. THE JUDGMENT
 - LVI. THE TRANSFIGURATION
 - LVII. THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY
- LVIII. THE HEALING MINISTRY OF JESUS
- LIX. THE MAN BORN BLIND
- LX. JESUS' LAST WORDS
- LXI. THE LORD'S SUPPER
- LXII. JESUS IN GETHSEMANE
- LXIII. THE WALK TO EMMAUS
- LXIV. THE FLESH AND THE SPIRIT

LESSON XXXVII

THE NEED OF THE WORLD FOR GOD

*Read I Thessalonians 4:13-18;
I Corinthians 15:51-57*

BACKGROUND:

BY "THE WORLD" is meant not the aggregate of humanity but a multitude of individuals. Nothing is more striking in a crowded street or assembly than the utter individuality. People may be crowded together, but they are as distinct as grains of sand. Aside from physical resemblances each is a world to himself in respect to the things which engage his special attention and occupy his mind, and as the mass moves on the individuals drift and sift away, and the separate elements become marked. Each has his own experiences, his own aims, his fears, his hopes; and these have usually no relation to those of the beings who press upon him, and so one might be tempted to say they had nothing in common. In his *capacities*, however,—his emotions, his sensibilities, his loves, his longings, his cares, his anxieties, and all those other things which go to make up a personality, they are alike. Distinctions of race, of language, of manner, or of habits of thought, make no difference in the essentials. It is to these common sentiments that appeal is made on occasions calling for benevolent or patriotic action.

If God and religion had not the capacity to adapt themselves to and meet the needs of this diverse but similar personality man would find nothing in either to satisfy. Mere human *minds*, though common to all,

have only a limited meeting ground. However elastic they are not alike, and do not often respond to the same appeal. If men were minds only, each would probably choose for his worship a different kind of God. But *hearts* are alike all over the world, and the God of the bible fits the needs of every one. This is not a mere dream, for preachers and missionaries everywhere have found it true.

To me this seems to support the statement of the bible that God created man in his own image, which of course means his *spirit*, since God has no body. No other being, however great, has ever met adequately the conscious needs of men everywhere. No other has ever offered mankind a tangible or satisfying comfort in sorrow, or hope in despondency.

Do men generally, and as a class, have needs? Oh yes indeed;—not that they are always conscious of them. The fire of youth and its whelming activities in times of health obscure them; and some compel themselves to forget these needs, or drown the sense of them by pre-occupations; yet the dull times, the sad times, the anxious times, are sure to come. Longfellow sings:

“Thy fate is the common fate of all,
 Into each life some rain must fall,
 Some days must be long and dreary.”

What then does a mortal as such need, beyond his own power to supply?—Sympathy of friends? Yes, but that at best has its limitations. It cannot cure bodily ailments, or restore dear ones who are taken away. Even God, it seems to me, could not adequately comfort us in such a case if he could not assure us of a happy meeting hereafter, under conditions where bodily pains do not recur. In illness God can heal, if he will, and he often

does; but new diseases come upon us, and at last one which is unto death. If there is no hereafter, in which there shall be no more pain, all solace is but temporary, and not satisfying. So only the conviction that there is a future life of bliss is an adequate answer to our needs, and this *must be* a gift of God. All cares, pains and anxieties can be peacefully borne if this is in view and confidently expected, and without it sympathy and kindness can only assuage; they cannot cure.

Thus the adequate answer to our many needs is God,—strong, patient, kind, and always near, with the confident assurance of permanency. Without this life is sad indeed.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. With all the gifts of God to humanity he gave them no assurance of permanency in their earthly surroundings, beautiful and appealing as they are.
2. Life has its limits, and humanity must look forward to its ending,—when and how being left uncertain; but its maximum is short compared with God's life. "What then"—will ring in the soul of every thoughtful person.
3. With all bodily needs supplied,—or so provided that they are accessible, so that industry and adaptability can attain them,—idleness and inattention may nevertheless miss them, and thus may have painful results. But the necessity for these is constant, and nature and the demands of the body will not permit them to be overlooked.
4. Sickness, sadness, wounds of the body and of the spirit, are inevitable, and a recovery from one is still to be followed by another, so that no man is ever altogether without disturbing experiences or apprehensions.
5. Accompanying these are many joys of life, and satisfying companionships, and also satisfying occupations, but these are so often interrupted and frequently are so brief that even man's profound pleasures are intermingled with fears.

6. If therefore God had left man to himself in his beautiful world he would not, at the best, be at peace; and often his unhappiness is so distressing that "in the morning he must say, would God it were night; and in the night would God it were morning."
7. But God Himself knew that man's soul could not die, and that when the body reaches its limit and surrenders to the forces which pull so heavily upon it there is still to come a future which may bring ineffable peace or unending sadness.
8. He also knew that among the cares and troubles of earthly life there was a source of satisfying comfort, and of renewing strength like that of the eagle.
9. We can infer then that if God was good and wise and patient, and if he loved these creatures he had brought into existence "in his own image," he would tell them so, and give them peace now, and a serene outlook for the future.
10. If we were to dream a dream of how this message would ultimately come, could we think of a more convincing method to make it clear, and intelligible and dependable, than by a story of his plan wrapped up in a narrative of its application to instances like ours.
11. If the race, at a time of great perplexity and great need, should have such a message brought before it, professing to come from God,—fitted to man's deepest needs, and applied in circumstances like his own,—would he reject it because it came by human means, and through human hands?
12. If there were no other, and men were compelled to say,—if this is not genuine and dependable then God has left me to grope alone,—would not the acute mind, conferred when he came into being, lead him to say—because there is no better evidence—this is my guide.
13. So God, having elected to confer on man the power to accept or reject, and even to close his eyes and his heart, can do no more except to invite and persuade, as in the sacred message he has done, and to prepare for him glories which he may inherit if he will.

LESSON XXXVIII

THE BIBLE AND ITS USES

Read: 2 Kings 22:8; 23:1-3

BACKGROUND:

WHEN a christian studies his bible he has certain things prejudged, which need not be newly investigated. He assumes:

- A. That God somehow brought the world into being, and placed on it the race of beings known as human; a dependent people, in constant need of guidance by superior wisdom.
- B. That these beings have bodies dependent for survival on a constant and adequate supply of nutrition, and therefore must be fed with "food convenient for them."
- C. That they have minds of extraordinary acuteness and capacity, which would be entirely useless unless there were a body of dependable natural laws, the operations of which would interest and profit them.
- D. That they have spirits, of a quality and capacity far beyond any other created thing, and incapable of death or deterioration, even though the body die. These spirits include what we call human emotions and sensibilities. Without means of cultivating these, life would be without joy.

Since then God has infinite power and kindness, and all embracing knowledge, the christian knows that he would amply provide for his creatures according to the faculties and capacities with which he has endowed them; or would so provide that they could satisfy their

own needs, and would in some manner indicate to them how that might be done.

This being apparent, and already a part of the christian equipment, we look to see whether the creator has in any intelligible manner communicated that knowledge.

Human experience is enough to prove that laws of growth and development, having a beneficent origin somewhere, do furnish nutriment and raiment for the wants of the body; and experience also proves that these are self-renewing and dependable, as well as simple. We also learn that there are physical laws prevailing in every field of human apprehension so true and reliable as to furnish a basis for an unfailing system of science;—but because no natural origin is adequate, and yet a beneficent outcome is plainly projected, these all must begin and end with a wise and kind and patient God.

And for the wants of the spirit we are equipped with an ancient book, written indeed by man, but purporting to be prepared under divine guidance and authority; and humanity, after many centuries of study and experience with it, has found that it adequately prescribes for every important need of the spirit; and many are the testimonies, in it and out of it, that to those who take it at its word it has never failed to comfort, to console and to satisfy.

It is not necessary here to inquire how we know its divine authorship, or to argue about its contents. It is enough to be convinced that the creator, being what he is, would not have placed our race as strangers in a complex world without messages of guidance, comfort and uplift in some dependable form; and this book alone meets that need, and adequately answers it. It asserts

the very relation between God and humanity which the condition of man fits into and calls for, and which we would expect God to provide; and it has now for many centuries been accepted by multitudes as a revelation from God to humanity. If it is not such then there is none, for in this field there is no competitor, and never was. This, considering the nature of God as we know it, and the needs of humanity as we know them, is inconceivable, if the book be not indeed of divine origin.

We, as students of the book, need not and do not argue to prove the divine authority of the Scriptures. This is not our province; others have done that adequately. We only exalt the fitness of the book for its purpose, and cling to our impressionistic but satisfying reasons for holding it firmly to our hearts and grasping its contents with our minds. What we do know is that it amply meets our conscious needs, and there is nothing else that even purports to do so. We have no alternative. Without it would be only darkness. We should feel, if Satan pressed us to yield it up, like the disciples when Jesus asked if they would turn away from him, who said,—“Lord, to whom shall we go?”

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. The Pentateuch gives mankind a picture of God's dealings with the Hebrew nation,—to which he had appointed in advance a special status,—commencing with its origin, thence to and through its time of residence in the land of Egypt, and to and through its march through the wilderness, emerging at last into the land so long promised.
2. The whole bible gives a similar picture of the journey of God's elect out of many nations, to and through a long series of generations, and to and through diverse experiences, emerging at last into the home promised to the soul.

3. The first, though historical, and in many respects constantly being verified in detail, is a type; and the second the anti-type. Both have long been idealized and spiritualized,—visioned, preached and sung, with thanksgiving, longing and hope.
4. Aside from their detail the pictures they present, viewed as impressionistic, have comforted many weary spirits in the whole history of striving upwards. They have filled the eyes, warmed the hearts and satisfied the longings of God's people for many centuries.
5. They have furnished the inspiration for artists, poets and hymn writers, back at least to the time of Moses, and forward at least to the time of Watts and Bunyan. The Pilgrim's Progress, which has condensed it into the experience of a single soul, has burned it into the apprehension of many a tempted and tried Christian.
6. It is no less powerful and influential in its detail. Individuals, conscious of both doubts and cares, have found instances in its recorded cases like their own, and have taken new confidence and courage from the story of their victories.
7. All the helpful impressions of biography have been left on the minds of hero-worshippers who are spurred to emulation or warning. Every phase of humanity, and every kind of weakness and strength, is illustrated in its pages.
8. Its system of didactics is repeated over and over, by different writers, and in different ages; and if they conflicted with each other or with the experiences of men this would have been long ago discovered.
9. It has but one theme, and one outstanding purpose, and this deals with the infirmities and weaknesses of men, and the remedies for their cure; and these human needs have never changed.
10. Some of the events and the modes of life, and other subjects of war and conflict which then occupied men's minds, are now unfamiliar except as history records them, but the world,—outlying and local,—must have been most of that time in turmoil. So prayers for help in attack or defense are plentiful.
11. But these only bring to the surface the sins and repentances of weak human beings, and the reproofs and corrections of the prophets of God. In every stage however, and in every act, its

character is judged by its relation to the will of God; and even the narratives of history are illustrations of God's method of dealing with humanity, which is the chief theme of the book.

12. Other ancient books have, in the development of time, become absurd, but not this, for humanity has not essentially changed. If we needed any new evidence to convince us of its divinity it is found in this, that it has always applied the same healing remedies to shifting forms of human sin and sorrow, and they have always been found effectual.

LESSON XXXIX

TEN COMMANDMENTS

Read Exodus 20

BACKGROUND:

A GOVERNING MONARCH, having force at his command, may arbitrarily prescribe his own rules of action,—called laws,—and his subjects must obey.

One who discovers a new law of nature, valuable to man and highly desirable,—like those leading up to the victrola, the radio, or the vitaphone,—may make his own terms for its use. The use of such a discovery may be voluntary, and not compulsory like a law, but such privileges can only be had on condition of obedience.

One who makes, or has made, laws of nature, and can control them, may reveal the mode in which they can be helpfully used, and may lay down rules in the nature of commands, by pursuing which its advantages may be gained, and since any other way will conflict with the law by which they operate no departure can avail. The mere failure to follow the prescribed method brings its own penalties.

This is equally true in the physical and the spiritual realm; and though the penalties,—i.e., the results of refusal to obey,—are not arbitrary nor tyrannical their certainty is the same.

The last class above mentioned fits the conditions under which God made what we call the ten commandments. If he is not the creator,—or at least if he does not know with entire assurance the conditions under which

society can work out its own best good,—then humanity may elect to disregard his laws, and may look elsewhere for what it deems more reasonable rules.

The test for this, if we are inclined to test it, is,—as in other like cases,—experience and observation. But if we have confidence in him a test is not necessary to assurance. This is faith. Even then, however, if our observation and experience confirm our faith we will bend our wills to obey, and will do so cheerfully unless, like the followers of Mrs. Eddy, we do not trust the evidence of our senses. The ten commandments are prescribed for us on the theory that God does know, and that our senses will certainly confirm it. Thus both faith and experience assure us that his laws are, as Paul says,—“holy and just and good.” The children of Israel had ample chance to know their reasonableness by both tests; and having chosen to follow him they needed no further evidence. Their disobedience was therefore wilful, and the sufferings which followed were normal, and not tyrannical.

Readings illustrating the foregoing:

1. The Commandments, and their purpose:

Deut. 6:24 For our good.

Deut. 8: 1 For our good.

Deut. 7: 8 Because God loves us.

2. The division of the law into tables:

Two—31 Ex: 18

31 Ex: 15-16

32 Ex. 19

34 Ex. 28

34 Ex. 1-4

9 Deut. 15

3. *Stated Negatively*—

Prohibitions—Ex. 20

Stated Positively—

Deut. 6:4-6

Deut. 10:12, 13

Deut. 11:22

4. *The accompanying promise:*

Deut. 11:13-15.

Deut. 11:22-24.

5. *Jesus' condensation:*

Matt. 22:37-40

Mark 12:28-31

Paul's

Romans 13:9, 10

The Lawyer, and his apprehension of them.

Luke 10:26-28

The Levite, and his.

Mark 12:28

6. The prevailing rules of equity framed and applied by and among human beings, do not differ essentially, within their field, from the fundamentals of Jesus' kingdom. An analysis will indicate this.

- a. Human equity relates only to the second table of the divine law;
- b. That table pertains only to the social relations of humanity;
- c. It does not deal with man's relation to God, nor to man's obligations or duties to God;
- d. Human relations are concerned only with those things which *tend to worldly happiness*;
- e. Within that field human laws,—negative or affirmative,—are at their best the *same* as those Jesus laid down as tending to human happiness.
- f. Condensed,—they may be expressed in Jesus' words,—“Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”
- g. Such were the Jewish laws: (second table); Roman social laws; Code Napoleon; English and American Rules in Equity.
- h. The fact that these two systems of social law are, in substance, so nearly alike is proof that the law of God has been framed to conform to human need, and *vice versa*.

LESSON XL

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT; ITS SOCIAL SIDE

Read Matthew 5

BACKGROUND:

IT IS evident that in Jesus' view the world had reversed the true theory on which human society was constituted. To this fundamental error he directed his inaugural address. We assume of course the requirement of the first table of the law relating to the loving and loyal service due to God. The world to which Jesus came was giving little thought to the equally definite requirements of the second table. The simplest approach to the study of the sermon on the mount in its application to human beings, between themselves, seems to be this,—God created men of independent minds, having differing viewpoints, but he intended them to live together. Somehow individual choices, which are likely to differ, must be chanced down so that the social life may be happy, even though two or more may want the same thing, or the same opening, or the same place in the sun. All through human history it had become evident that the strong could not easily bring themselves to yield to the weak, nor the swift to the slow, nor the quick-witted to the dull; and also that the loser would be angry and resentful. The result has always been tyranny, oppression, trickery, monopoly, and,—wrought out of these,—heart-burning, resentment, unhappiness, and almost constant warfare. It was evident then, at the coming of Jesus, that the true theory of social life had been missed, and even perverted. The

sermon on the mount was intended to correct this, and to reinstate a Godwise point of view, and show humanity how to live together happily while still allowing to every individual all the liberty which will comport with the general contentment and development. "Can't you and your wife live together without fighting" said an English rector to a quarrelsome sailor. "Not 'appily sir," said the sailor. Is it possible that, with self respect, this may come about? Yes, if our errors in point of view be corrected, and the human will be brought to conform. By the old system Number One was always in the spotlight; under the new Number Two is to have equal consideration. To the Jews of Christ's time, as to most of us now, this displacing of emphasis seemed revolutionary. It is said that Lord Cornwallis' troops, when at Yorktown they marched out to lay down their arms, were preceded by fifers and drummers playing "The World Upside Down." Luke, in Acts, shows that the gospel rule was by some of Paul's auditors regarded as "turning the world upside down." But the subsequent experiences even of the Thessalonians, also recorded by Luke, show that when the world had been turned upside down it was, for the first time, right side up. And so Jesus taught in this Sermon it would ever be. That those who disobey God are upside down is assumed elsewhere in Scripture. In Psalms 146:9, the Psalmist says of the Lord's dealings with men,—"The way of the wicked he turneth upside down." It seems reasonable, then, to say that the sermon on the mount was intended to change the social attitude of the world;—to turn it upside down. And this was taught not merely didactically, as new truth, but also by opening men's eyes to the plain error in the accepted theories, and showing a

practical and reasonable ground for changing, and a way to bring it about.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. The recognition of the private ownership of a particular item of property originated, says Blackstone, in possession, which came to be regarded as an evidence of title. But when strength could take it away, or trickery filch it away, the selfish desires of humanity led to disregard of this righteous theory, and might became right.
2. Manifestly this resulted from an uncontrolled will; and avarice was a little farther back. The kindly spirit which invites and receives only equal privilege, was lacking.
3. The cure for this lay in choosing to be "poor"—by preference; —not poor in goods necessarily but "poor in spirit"; and those who can attain this are "blessed," Jesus said.
4. Is not this revolutionary? But is it not true? Peace and contentment belong, in the nature of things, to those who are "poor in spirit."
5. "Give and it shall be given unto you," said Jesus, appealing to common knowledge: "Pressed down, running over, shaken together, shall men give into your bosom."
6. But "blessing" is only another name for happiness, which is what the world, in Jesus' time and now, blindly seeks. It is a blind search yet, with those who have not accepted the teaching of Jesus as a code of living.
7. The same is true of the other virtues which are named in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus assumed throughout the propriety of the search for happiness as an ultimate aim, but he corrected the human error in the mode of attaining it.
8. It is not wrong to desire "blessedness," but the world is full of men seeking it, and all have an equal right to get it. This search, by many at once, is what we call the "social order," and it is with this that the sermon on the mount deals.
9. Happiness (blessedness) is found, says Jesus, not in wrestling with others for an object which it is assumed one may have and the other not, and which, after all, is at most a *means* to an end, and not the end itself, but in the cultivation of a *spirit*

which operates like a magnet in drawing to itself the elements of conscious happiness.

10. The basic element is not abandonment, or surrender, but restraint;—operating like the law of gravitation, which has two phases,—like a body moving in an orbit,—where the tendency to fly *in*, (centripetal), and the tendency to fly *out*, (centrifugal), work together to produce peace.
11. Is not this the purpose and the true lesson of the sermon on the mount? If so it is not so easy or natural as it looks, but it does lead, by the shortest and surest way, to perennial peace,—in the individual and in society.

LESSON XLI

BLESSED ARE YE IF: A PHILOSOPHY

BACKGROUND:

ARE human beings capable of happiness? Yes. Are the best things in the world capable of affording happiness? Yes. Then here we have on the one part, beings, framed in the image of God, reaching eagerly out for happiness, and, on the other part, the world as eagerly reaching out its good things. Why then can't they get together? Because neither seems able to be conscious of the other. Did you ever see Warfield play "The Return of Peter Grimm"? If so you will see the analogy.

This is sound, thus far, even if the subject matter is,—as we sometimes find it, thoroughly worldly; for in human philosophy, as well as in God's, every blessing is conditional; and strange to say both philosophies are much alike, a part of the way.

You can have the blessing of wisdom, *if you work for it.*

You can have the blessing of strength, *if you exercise for it.*

You can have the blessing of wealth, *if you are industrious and economical.*

You can have the blessing of friends, *if you are yourself friendly.*

These are human maxims. They sound like Benjamin Franklin,—Poor Richard. Your grandmother taught you many such:

"Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy and wealthy and wise."

"He who would thrive must rise at five."

"An empty bag cannot stand upright."

"Now I have sheep and a cow, everybody bids me good Morrow."

and many more to like effect. It is true of human philosophy, as of divine, that the gifts of God are *conditional*. They must be earned or coaxed, and often must be waited for. Thus the epigrams of Jesus are not different from the sayings of wise men—halfway. "Blessed art thou *if*,—" is a handle that fits them both. The differences *in the second half* are of two kinds: (1) In worldly things the blessings sought are generally short-lived. In the eyes and minds of men, the blessings especially desired pertain to the world, and are therefore temporal. It is assumed that you will be blessed if you have health, or wealth, or friends; but if you had all those, and enjoyed them, their limit is only three score years and ten; none, in their nature, can reach further—but *we* need to know,—what afterwards? There is also another wide difference. The assumption that temporal advantages bring happiness is false, and is well known to be. Many people, even in our own circle, are healthy and wealthy and wise, and command esteem, but are not happy; and place or circumstance have little to do with it. There is as much unhappiness on the Lake Shore Drive as on South Halsted Street. The plain reason is that happiness is within. Prosperity promises but does not pay. Many a child was happier on Christmas with a rag doll,—home made,—than with a fluffy haired doll that could talk and move its eyes. A similar comparison is equally true of older people.

But Jesus' tests of "blessedness" were different from those which normally appeal to humanity; and he fills out that unfinished sentence differently. He gives examples of varied kinds,—comprising the things on which blessedness is conditioned: i.e.—

The "poor in spirit": those who have their mourning now.

The "meek"; i.e., those who, like Moses, (who was the " meekest" man) can postpone their own desires, and give first place to the will of God.

Those who greatly desire personal character, (in themselves and others),—"hunger and thirst after righteousness."

The "merciful";—the kindly, the gracious, the self sacrificing.

The "pure in heart"; i.e., those to whom Godlike qualities are most desirable.

The "peace-makers"; i.e., those to whom the golden rule is the best code for living.

and "those who can take patiently" the resentments of the world,—knowing they are not deserved.

What a cluster of graces. Oh we know quite well that all these contribute to real happiness, and yet until Jesus spoke them they were not in any worldly code of behavior. Look then and see if life with these would not be worth living, even judged from our worldly standpoint. If we could induce the world to test them,—if we could test them ourselves,—even selfishly, and for our personal good, would they not bring us to that happy state we seek?

They seem revolutionary, but that is because we have accustomed ourselves to think that only what we can grasp will satisfy. One great distinction is that

divine blessings often come from what men believe will prevent them.

It is not only in these verses but in many other passages that our attention is drawn to the errors in our worldly philosophy.

If we want to *retain* our physical strength, should we not be careful not to waste it?

No; for we are well aware that the way to preserve strength is to *use* it.

If we set ourselves to be rich is it not wise to *keep* what we have?

No, for Jesus teaches, and we find it true, that—"the liberal soul shall be made fat." Also that if we give, others will give to us,—"pressed down, shaken together and running over."

If we want the kindness of friends, had we not better be merely *receptive*?

No, for we are taught, and have become deeply assured, that "he that would have friends must show himself friendly."

The prescription that if compelled to go a mile with another we should go two—seems a hard rule; but he who has read Dr. Fosdick's little book "The Second Mile" will be convinced, if he does not know it already, that the favor is *received*, rather than *conferred*.

We are taught by our own observation that keeping is not saving; that giving is not wasting; that sowing is a condition of reaping; that the use of faculties, or even of muscles, is not consuming them. In this respect nothing else is within this class.

Could Jesus, at the beginning of his ministry, say anything more true and yet more revolutionary, as the program or cornerstone of his kingdom:—so sound, and

yet so fresh: so helpful in a friendly social life on the earth and yet so appealing spiritually,—comprising not only joys in living, while the body lasts, but also a long look forward to a world of bliss to come.

LESSON XLII

BLESSED ARE YE IF: AN ASSURANCE

BACKGROUND:

SINCE the blessings here promised, though assurance begins now, are to be realized in the future, and are of a spiritual nature, (for they affect the sensibilities and not the appetites), a striking contrast is implied: There are those who shall be blessed, and there are those who shall not. “Blessed are ye” is not inconsistent with this, for in this as in other things comprising the blessings of heirship, though the satisfaction of assurance begins now, the full possession,—(“yours,” said the Master),—begins when the promise is *fulfilled*, in permanent title. In Luke, the record makes the contrast explicit by asserting *woes* on those who shall *not* be in the class of the blessed: “Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.” “Woe unto you that are rich, for ye *have received* your consolation.” Some writers suppose the report of Luke to record a different sermon, dealing only with present conditions and possessions, but I do not so regard it. The promise to the poor, even as found in Luke, cannot mean those who have little of this world’s goods,—though that may be true,—for “yours is the kingdom of heaven” must relate to a spiritual possession, to be fully entered on in another sphere of existence. Otherwise, the term “yours” would not be appropriate. The kingdom of heaven cannot be *owned* by humanity, much less by mere individuals. They may enjoy its pleasures in antic-

ipation, and may by obedience acquire an assurance equivalent to a postponed title, but so also may those who are "poor in spirit" while in this present world. Jesus could not have meant to assure them that any individual may at present *own* it. Assenting to this interpretation the promise or assurance is not that hereafter the acquisitions of earth shall be multiplied or magnified, but that (for example) a contented spirit (poverty in spirit) in this life may be rewarded in the next by ample joys, and that promise may be trusted in and rested upon now. So it is said that those who hunger for righteousness (aspire for likeness to God) *shall have* that very blessing in ample measure. Surely they are not to get it now. And so it is with the woes promised in the same connection (in Luke). The kingdom of heaven is not said to be denied to the rich as a penalty for wealth, but only because they have no strong desire for spiritual gifts. "*Ye have received your consolation.*" Having received here the only reward they have earnestly sought there remains to them nothing further. This is the distinction Peter makes when he says, "They who *desire* to be rich shall fall into many hurtful lusts."

Thus the sermon on the mount teaches that those who have a right to expect the munificent gifts of God in the world to which we are all destined must cultivate in this life those graces of the spirit which open the soul to receive with joy those promised blessings, as they are bestowed hereafter.

And it is remarkable that such a spirit, here among other human beings, invites response; and so it tends to agreeable and helpful social relations also. Jesus said, in another connection—"Give and it shall be given to

you, full measure, pressed down and running over,
shall men give into your bosom."

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. Jesus came from heaven, where everything is peace and joy and brotherly affection, and yet he assures us (in John 14) that there we shall find distinct and several abodes.
2. In his view it ought to be so here and now, and can be, if the worldly habit of *meum* and *tuum* were not so harshly and selfishly asserted and applied.
3. This harmonizes with his language in what we call the "Golden Rule"—"Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you," and such is also his condensation of the second table of the law (in Matt. 22, 39)—"Thou shalt love thy neighbor *as thyself*."
4. Neither wilfulness nor covetousness are within the Godlike mode of living together, but self-respect is not forbidden, *but it ought to be mutual*, as it is in heaven, where all do the will of God. Such is the plain teaching of the prayer which he taught his disciples.
5. No one of us, we apprehend, doubts—theoretically at least,—that mankind would indeed be "blessed" if this rule were kept. This is the reason even those who do not profess Christianity approve the sermon on the mount as a mode of life.
6. When men are of an open mind, and willing to be reasonable, they "approve the more excellent things," as Paul, in Romans, said of the Jews.
7. It is not therefore because men are *unable* to apprehend the command of God that they should live peaceably with one another, but because they *will not*, that there is such discord on earth.
8. Oh the human will! How perverse it is! It is no wonder that men listened with such eagerness to Jesus when he taught these simple lessons. If we were not ourselves so much like them we would wonder that, having heard them, they should turn away,—some no doubt sadly, like the rich young ruler,—and go on with their dissensions as before.

9. Every blessed promise of God opens with an "if." "If you know these things, happy (blessed) are ye if ye do them."
10. We turn away, after these reflections, to confront again our rebellious wills. Even belief of unusual things is hard enough, but to will is harder. The father of the sick boy cried out,— "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

LESSON XLIII

JUDGING BY FRUITS

Read Luke 6:37-45, 8:18

BACKGROUND:

SHALL we judge at all? Yes and No. We are not to judge by condemning, and we are not concerned, except sympathetically, with the results to themselves of the beliefs, behavior or teachings of others. "Judge not, that ye be not judged," said Jesus. But when and in so far as we are ourselves affected we *must* judge. Jesus also said "beware of false prophets. By their fruits ye shall know them." We are never to be guided or persuaded by those who are essentially wrong themselves.

Is it not remarkable what power a command of mellifluous speech, and a fine declamatory style can exercise over the most cautious of us. Everywhere we see it, and often and often we feel it. In every city or larger town there are enthusiasts, sometimes very sincere, often not so much so, who collect a following though their teachings are demonstrably erroneous. What then are we to do when so many attractive wares are shown in the shop window. "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life," said the writer of the Proverbs. If evil intrudes evil will be produced. Jesus said, "An evil man out of the evil treasures of his heart bringeth forth evil." Thus every teacher and every book, and every source from which the mind and heart are supplied with the basis of judgment, or with the tests of judgment, must itself be judged. But how:—

by its fruits; and this includes a teacher's words and his acts. Jesus said: "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

Many an eager, aspiring mind has been warped,—frequently in youth,—by the errors,—sometimes evilly intended, sometimes not,—of those standing in a position to instruct. Sometimes foolish and ill-advised parents; sometimes perverted teachers; sometimes bad books. In these days many an author, aspiring to produce a "best-seller", has done infinite harm; of this many recent instances could be given. The main thing to learn from this lesson is the necessity to examine the fitness of the teacher,—not judging him as to his standing before God, but testing him as a teacher or guide, by his own life and the purport of his words, whether he be a fit teacher for a spirit which must make its own accounting.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. Most of our information, some of it about facts, is derived from others. Some spheres, like mathematics, we could test as to their veracity,—but we rarely do.
2. The facts about current events are gathered chiefly from the newspapers, and these we have learned to classify as likely to be truly stated or not.
3. The facts of history also are colored, as we well know, by the mental attitude of the writers. Thus Warren Hastings is pictured as an ambitious and unscrupulous rogue by Macaulay, while most others depict him as an abused and misunderstood man.
4. So the facts on which every school of religion rests have been stated in conflicting terms,—for example, by Thomas Paine and John Bunyan.
5. It is evident therefore that we *must* judge who shall be our teachers. Doubtless many a young man's religious faith has been destroyed in college by Godless teaching.

6. For this reason, without even considering that this is a characteristic of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, many parents scrutinize with care, and even with anxiety, the viewpoint of the colleges available to educate their children.
7. There also is a test of companionship. We may be seriously misled in many ways by warped or wicked associates.
8. It is plain therefore that we cannot avoid judging others if we would give due care to our own interests.
9. And how shall we test them? We can readily learn their tendency, but to judge whether it be bad or good we must have a standard of our own, for comparison.
10. Often we find our criteria and our atmosphere created for us by our family training. It is astonishing how much of ourselves is already formed and fixed, altogether without our attention being given to it, by what we saw and heard in childhood.

LESSON XLIV

A PRESCRIPTION FOR THE CURE OF SOULS

Read John 14:1-5

BACKGROUND:

JESUS was about to go back to the country of bliss and of brilliancy from which he had come; and his disciples were troubled. Jesus knew how to cure the ills of the body. He had healed many sick people, but he knew that to be temporary, and not satisfying. The troubles of the soul (heart) are deeper and last longer, but one prescription was sufficient for them all. For the body the doctor prescribes practically a remedy for every symptom, and these are often ineffectual because frequently the symptoms do not correctly indicate the disease. This is not true of the soul. Its troubles have also many aspects, but they have only one principal source.

Jesus' prescription was in six words,—“Believe in God; believe in me.” This is condensation reduced to lowest terms. Jesus condensed in a similar fashion the entire moral law,—as it relates to God and to fellow man,—into two short verses. It seems to us brief enough in the ten commandments, but when reduced to two the minimum seems to have been reached. The pertinency and sufficiency of Jesus' prescription for the troubles of the soul are seen by a comparison between God and man. Man was made “in the image of God,” and therefore his soul qualities are Godlike, but in a limited degree. Man's life is “temno,”—time,—a portion only, —*cut-off*; whereas God's is without beginning or end. If

the trouble of the soul therefore grows out of death,—separation,—the acceptance of Jesus' offer to prepare a place in his own world is assurance of an eternal home, in which there will be no death and no separation. If the trouble is that the way is not clear,—as was the case with Thomas,—belief in Jesus is a cure, because he promised to return and bring the troubled one home. If, as in Philip's case, the doubt is whether man will be fitted for God's companionship, it is a cure to be assured that God's qualities are like those of man, though infinitely enlarged and extended. And God is kind and patient. Thus belief in God is a specific for such trouble; and Jesus applied it to Philip's case,—saying—"Have I been so long a time with you, and hast thou not known me, Philip?"

It is therefore no fiction and no dream to see in Jesus' prescription a real and permanent cure for heart troubles. This I take to be the meaning of the first verse of Chapter 14,—"Let not your heart be troubled." This is an assertion that a cure is at hand, and any one can obtain and apply it at will. So it is with the "home" which is promised. It is a resting place for the *soul*,—not merely a harbor for the body. All the multitude of human beings accepting this invitation will find conditions "prepared," and all fit and congenial. With this understanding is it not quite real and true that belief in God, whom Jesus represented, and in Jesus himself, whom they had known in conditions like their own, would relieve the soul of its burdens and troubles?

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. Many of the lessons of scripture are interpreted according to a casual or superficial definition of terms.

2. The "heart" is the center of the *emotional* system, and in Jesus' admonition, "let not your heart be troubled," the world plainly means those troubles which concern the spiritual life.
3. Jesus was here referring to his expected departure, and the sorrow and anxiety which had fallen on his disciples. This seems to be the plain purport of the whole conversation.
4. Thomas did not know where Jesus was going, and could not, he thought, be expected to trace the way. But he was told to believe that Jesus would duly bring him there; and since Jesus' destination was also the place of his origin mere acceptance was all Thomas needed.
5. Philip's trouble was that he was directed to believe God whom, as he thought, he had not seen. But when he realized that Jesus was sent in part to make God known he found that belief was a complete answer in itself.
6. God's life is man's life immensely extended. God's qualities of kindness, patience, power and continuity are the same as those of man, magnified to the *n*th power. Man's belief is founded upon this, and so belief is in effect an appropriation; and this alone is required to satisfy human need.
7. Thus Jesus' prescription for the cure of man's spiritual ailments is logical, reasonable, and also adequate. Belief in God and in Jesus leads directly into that condition in which those troubles fade away and forever cease.

LESSON XLV

ONLY A FEW SICK FOLK

Read Mark 6

BACKGROUND:

THE diseases and disorders of the world, how sad they are! Especially so in the poverty-stricken and unkempt East, where the friends of the deeply sick can do little but stand by and watch them die. Only the blank fatalism of the Moslem world makes their sorrows bearable:—"It is the will of Allah." Even here in fortunate America, where medical science is at its best, and beds are easy and nurses are kind, the many hospitals are crowded. Sometimes it is the ending of a long career, and the body is normally fading away to its long repose. Sometimes it is hot fever; sometimes dreadful suffering; but so it befalls humanity. And yet humanity as a whole is not sad. It is not even taught patience or consideration or faith by the sight of so much disease. It is in general a thoughtless, laughing, untroubled world. Beyond an occasional wave of sadness when suffering approaches closely there is but little of the attitude of sympathy. Oh, we can thank God it is not always so. Else we would have no hospitals or nurseries or homes for the aged or crippled. But the individual, like the community, does not have to be long in that mood. To the sick one the days are long. In the daytime he says, Would God it were night; and in the nighttime, Would God it were day. And when Jesus, the sympathizer and also the healer, passed by and saw them brought where he was, in hope of aid, his

heart was touched, and even where, by reason of the worldliness of the noisy street crowds, who had no faith, he could perform no great miracles, yet he did not overlook the suffering and pain; and he "healed a few sick folks." They at least would respond with faith and loyalty; and perhaps they did,—for awhile. But in his greatest need he was forsaken also by those whom he had helped and healed.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. Sickness and depression of spirit usually go together. A cheerful invalid is rare.
2. The bodily and mental faculties lose their resiliency together.
3. Persons ill with prolonged or incurable affections often learn patience, and many such are lovely characters. Instances like this you doubtless know.
4. But even these long for a time when it will be over; either by a recovery or by a translation they hope for a break in the slow monotony.
5. But in most instances they can scarcely be called patients; they are merely "sick folks," and they often weep, and sometimes grow crabbed with impatience to be well.
6. I suppose it was chiefly such as these who were the subjects of Jesus' healing touch when by reason of the lack of faith he could do no spectacular miracles.
7. I suppose even his brilliant eyes and his deep, melodious and sympathetic voice had in them encouragement to hope; for it is written of so many that they "looked upon him" and were healed.
8. His healing was remarkable in that there was no period of convalescence. Peter's wife's mother was "sick of a fever," which wears down both body and spirit. But when she was healed "she rose up and ministered to them."
9. The centurion's little girl, who had been sick so long that her father had time to send a message to Jesus, arose immediately when the Master touched her.

10. The woman who had been sick with a wasting disease twenty years, when she touched the hem of his garment was immediately made whole.
11. Those persons whose critical spirit makes it hard for them to accept the simple statements of the gospel writers of the circumstances of these miracles suffer a profound loss, for if these are not to be deemed reliable then the record of the gracious assurance and promise must go also, and there is no comfort left. This is sad indeed, for there is no recourse. As the disciples said under analogous circumstances, these of our modern day must also say,—and find no answer,—“Lord to whom shall we go.”
12. One who doubts the power of restoring life must also doubt the power of originating it. What is there left even to explain the capacity to question and consider. Evolution, at its deepest, has to assume life, and begins only with its operation; and the doubter must pause there and say,—“We know nothing of the origin of life; nothing.”
13. The alternative is the hardest, for those biographers of Jesus were also witnesses, and they coupled together the creative or restorative power, which are for the body, and the comforting words, which reached the heart.
14. But even he who accepts the divine power and authority must see that Jesus could not by healing the body give the patient peace. He must needs also heal the spirit.
15. And so the hope of the world now is not found in the health of the body, but in a confident and contented spirit.

LESSON XLVI

GOD'S CARE FOR HIS CREATURES

Read Luke 12:22-30

BACKGROUND:

Do you think it an accident that the needs of humanity are so closely and adequately met by the laws of nature? How long could the physical strength of the human body bear up if the strain of the day were not reinvigorated by the rest of the night? How long could a man use his faculties without the intervals of sleep? What is sleep? In its simplicity,—without scientific explanation,—it is the daily repose of the bodily senses and muscles to prepare for another day. "Blessed be the man who first invented sleep," says Sancho Panza. "Tired nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep," says Young. But is sleep an accident? Is its restorative effect an accident? Is its regular recurrence an accident? If not how does it come about? And how does it come about that food, at frequent intervals, rebuilds the waste tissues, and starts man off for a new period of activity? And how is it that the earth produces, as they are required, the nourishing foods which are exactly adapted to build up the human muscles, blood and nerves, and that it is so regularly available? Are these accidents? And if man asserts that he himself provides for his own needs how can he explain the birds, the animals, the fishes, who are incapable of providing for themselves? There is no explanation which can satisfy a thinking person except that some superior intelligence has started, and continues to maintain, the laws

themselves, and adapts supplies to requirements so that a world of conscious creatures may, for century on century, depend on them with security.

The word of Jesus furnishes the only explanation. God, the creator, infinitely wise and infinitely kind, provides for them all; and, having stored the earth with an ample supply, fits out every creature, even those having small intelligence, with knowledge enough to find it and use it. If then God provides his unintelligent creatures with these supplies, amply and regularly, shall he not much more provide for men, who are made in his image? So Jesus comforts and satisfies even those who are fearful, and reminds those who are forgetful. Why then should we be fearful? Why should we be ungrateful?

It is so also with the higher sensibilities. He points us to the lilies,—all unconscious,—which adorn the universe, but do no other good. Yet they find their nourishment regularly provided. From this we draw assurance that he will provide also for the needs of the spirit. Those who are anxious may have confidence; and those who are weary may trust him for rest.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. Mechanically perhaps an automobile, with its thousands of parts designed to interplay and operate together, is a fair symbol of complexity, the most surprising feature of which is that when under way the separate elements almost seem to think.
2. But when it is operating at its best and smoothest there must be a man at the wheel. Even its gasoline and its lubricants must be predigested, as it were; i.e., perfectly fitted for its use. You can't feed it crude oil, and rely on its mechanism to separate the explosive gasoline.

3. We cannot imagine an automobile thinking;—selecting its own fuel, or filling up the tank when empty; or tightening a screw or a brake or a piston rod. This however is what the human being does, automatically.
4. Apparently the human mechanism requires no supervision. Breathing; the circulation of the blood; the beating of the heart; all are accomplished without attention, and even when unconscious in sleep.
5. And, strangest of all, the functions of the body adapt themselves to changing conditions, which the most delicate machinery cannot do,—without some pressure or constraint applied from without,—as one automatically draws an additional breath on Pike's Peak.
6. But even man, so perfectly constructed and adapted, must have his requirements created for him, and put where he can find them. He cannot create his own food, nor his own atmosphere, nor the materials of which his tools are made.
7. If vegetation should cease, or water fail, or the air float away, or the sun cease to shine; or if by any accident the qualities of these should be interchanged, or cease to be reliable, his life would not be worth an hour's purchase.
8. If God, or if the constantly creating and constantly supervising power behind these,—by whatever name known,—should depart, or change his mind, or lose his interest, the world would soon be an empty place.
9. And yet his care is so constant, and so unerring that man is apt to forget altogether that he is the subject of care.
10. This was what Jesus was teaching. How simple it is when one thinks, and yet how earnestly we should pray if we saw any of the supplies likely to be withdrawn.
11. The same, or like, care provides and maintains our spiritual pleasures;— peace, joy, friendship, love, and many like them.
12. Man, in his periods of anxiety, or fear, or perplexity, realizes these, and builds his hopes of relief on the goodness of God. Why can he not always maintain the expectant and *also* the grateful attitude?

186 STUDIES FOR THE ADULT BIBLE CLASS

READINGS:

God's Willingness to Give:

Luke 11:10-13

Luke 12:24-28

Luke 18:38-42

The Details of Care:

Matt. 10:28-31

Matt. 15:32

Spiritual Gifts:

Matt. 11:28-30

LESSON XLVII

THE PARADOXES OF THE NEW KINGDOM

Read Luke 6:30-39

BACKGROUND:

A PARADOX, by definition, is a statement or proposition apparently absurd, but which may be true. But a paradox, to any particular person, may be absurd only because his notions of truth are erroneous. One of the easiest remembered cases of doubt on the subject of truth is that of Pilate, at the trial of Jesus. "What is truth?" said he. And living in the midst of doubts and conflicting views it would be remarkable if we were not perverted in some, at least, of our views about things. These to us are truth, although they may easily be disproved. Here then is the place for the paradox. Mathematics is among the most specific and definite of sciences, and it cannot vary. The multiplication table makes no concessions to time, place, person or circumstance. And yet addition or subtraction or division do not always produce the same result. In the case of a military commander, for instance, having narrow outlook and apprehension, the addition of a new brigade, though apparently increasing his power of attack or defense, may be the ruin of his army and his cause. Some generals in the late war had that experience. The same may be true though he be a skilled commander if his location is too contracted to use his force. Gideon had a more effective army when reduced to three hundred than when he started out with thirty-two thousand. "Two heads are better than one," says

the proverb, but many of us have come to know that it is not always so.

So in the new kingdom eleven men were enough to "turn the world upside down," though Alexander and his army failed. "One on God's side is a majority," said Wendell Phillips. This is a slogan often tested and proved. That one may give and have more, or save and have less, has been often found true. In Chicago for many years Thomas Kane, preaching the gospel of tithing, advertised widely asking to be informed if any man, consistently paying a tenth to the Lord, has suffered by it; and he often said he had received not a single authentic instance. Yet it would seem plain that the giver had only nine-tenths left, to do the work of ten. The widow casting two mites into the treasury was said to have given more than the others, though some were rich, and gave much. This and many others like it are the paradoxes of Jesus' kingdom, for God adds his weight to the scale,—his shekel to the money cast into the treasury.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. If you use your bodily strength to its limit, have you less? No, you have more.
2. If you use your mental powers, ever so strenuously, have you less? No, you have more, and that is the ordained way to get it.
3. How about giving, in the field of the affections. Is your capacity for loving diminished thereby? No, it is increased; and this every one knows. But you cannot prove it by mathematics.
4. If you give to God do you find the residue diminished? Perhaps, if reckoned in dollars and cents. But not always. And reckoned in purchasing power, no. It has often been tried and proved.
5. It is not only that God increases the productive value of the residue, though this also has been often tried and proved; but

your neighbors and friends also join, all unconsciously, to make it good to you.

6. "Give, and it shall be given unto you," said Jesus,—"pressed down, shaken together, and running over shall men give unto your bosom."
7. It is common observation that a man who is self-contained, and does not yield to enthusiasms or eagerness, is a sad man. He has few joys himself, and rarely confers any on others.
8. A man like that is out of place at a football game or a political convention. The reason is plain. The apprehensions of a human soul are hinged to swing both ways. They will receive,—yes,—but if they do not also give, the owner gets not even personal pleasure.
9. Mankind is not made to get his pleasures in self-restraint. "It is more blessed (happy) to give than to receive," said Jesus, and he knew.
10. These nearly silent pianos, made for the use of beginners living in a crowded apartment building, may do to practice on quietly, but good music must have more expression and variety.
11. A capacity for zeal, interest, enthusiasm, is a source of satisfaction to its owner, but in its nature it overflows, and the surrounding territory also turns green.
12. Do you remember the tale of a running brook, which, sparkling and singing through the fields, concluded this was a great waste, so it built up a bank at its outlet, and in a little time had plenty of water, but it was green with slime, and even the cows and the birds avoided it.

LESSON XLVIII

THE FAITH OF THE CENTURION

Read Luke 7:1-10

BACKGROUND:

THE centurion was the head of a body of Roman soldiers, whose chief function it was, in Palestine, to guard against uprisings of the rebellious Jews. There was a garrison at Caesarea, and another at Jerusalem. It was the chief captain there who saved Paul, and took him to Caesarea. The rule of an officer was absolute. He commanded and was obeyed. This officer remembered his own despotic authority in sending his message to Jesus. He could not even imagine disobedience. When he said to one "go," he went; and when he said "come," he came. Having heard of Jesus' miracles of healing, he probably imagined him as equally despotic in his rule over the powers of evil, which caused sickness. In this there was no pretence. He did not argue that it must be so. He was merely confident. But he was also aware that the realm in which Jesus commanded was higher than his own, and he approached him with great respect. It was not hard for a Roman, schooled in the legends of paganism, to conceive of God coming to earth in the form of man. Paul and Barnabas at Lystra found a like ready acceptance. When they healed the cripple the people called Barnabas Jupiter and Paul Mercury; and they said "the gods are come down to us in the likeness of men."

But the centurion was no longer a pagan, though trained in its atmosphere. He built a synagogue for the

Jews of Capernaum. He was also a kindly man. He was friendly to his Jewish neighbors. Doubtless he was deeply religious. He had found but little comfort in his own religion, and his heart was stirred by the devoutness of the Jews, and the convincing quality of their scriptures. Perhaps his theology was mixed, and at the present time might be hard to classify. But he had an afflicted slave who "was dear to him". Those familiar with the story of Uncle Tom's Cabin, can easily understand this. So without waiving his self-respect, or compromising his position of authority, he could ask for the intervention of the official Jews to beseech the healing intervention of Jesus. But he said,—"Do not trouble thyself to come. Exert thy superior power, and command this affliction to depart."

Oh it was simple faith. His mind was not harassed with pre-judgments, as were those of the Jews, who, though they saw visibly the miracles of Jesus, could not reconcile them with their firm conviction that he could not be divine. Jesus himself said to the pharisees,—"Except ye repent and become as little children you cannot *see* the Kingdom of God." But the centurion could and did, and of him Jesus said,—"I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel." And perhaps the same reasons explain why it is easier, even now, to make glad and loving converts among the residents of the highways and byways than among the unburdened on the gold coast.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. Those were days when caste was distinctly marked; and especially among the military an officer possessed an authority which no mere soldier dared dispute.

2. Generally the privates were wholly dependent on the good will of their superiors, and some of them were slaves. The habit of prompt obedience therefore was such that this would be taken for granted.
3. The power of Jesus over disease,—even so fatal as leprosy,—was so marked that to the officer it was much like his own power over his subordinates.
4. To the centurion disease was the work of evil spirits, who, as he supposed, were wholly subject to the authority of Jesus. He knew no other explanation of the frequent miracles of healing than the command of the Master to forbear.
5. It was therefore quite within his habitual thinking that if Jesus would command he would be instantly obeyed, and this even at a distance.
6. The Jews themselves held similar views as to the nature of disease, but their faith was hampered by their belief that the power to heal was divinely bestowed. Thus a miracle of healing would not, to them, result alone from the *power* of Jesus, but might or might not be confirmed by the great God.
7. Thus, when they could not doubt his miracles, they said he performed them as the agency of Beelzebub.
8. But many of the cured ones saw it differently. It was God's power, they said. Thus the man born blind, who said God only could confer original sight; and the paralytic; and the woman who was "loosed from her infirmity." She "glorified God," says Luke.
9. Yet some of these also seemed to see the power apparently directly exercised, as when he "rebuked" the fever in Peter's wife's mother.
10. And sometimes it appeared to be both, as when he raised Lazarus,—but first openly prayed to God.
11. Thus the Jews seemed always in doubt, but not so the Roman officer. He accepted the evidence of his senses, simply and confidently. He could not see the evil spirits at work, but he had seen them cease at once on the command of Jesus.
12. Thus he *knew* that the command of Jesus would be equally effective even at a distance, and he said,—"Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed."

13. Jesus longed for such evidence of confidence, and compared it with the doubt and hesitation of the Jew; he said,—“I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel.”
14. The Jews could not believe,—or believed with difficulty,—because they had prejudged him, and thought there must be an explanation concealed from them. He said to them that unless they should repent and become as little children they could not even see the Kingdom of God.
15. The Gentiles, under the apostle’s preaching, believed easily and heartily, for they were without adverse prepossessions.
16. Thank God that your ancestors and mine, when they saw the love and power of Jesus, accepted it gladly, and clung to it with assurance like that of the centurion.

LESSON XLIX

THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

Read Matthew 25:15-30

BACKGROUND:

ARE all men indeed “created equal”? It is so stated in our Declaration of Independence, but to make it harmonize with common observation it must be given a meaning not apparent on the surface. Certainly men are not equal in natural qualities. Not even in the same family, with like heritage and similar opportunities, are they alike. Were Joseph and his brethren equal? Were Jacob and Esau, or David and his brethren, or Solomon and his brethren? It is equally certain that men are not equal in attainments. Some are wise and some otherwise. The Field family of a former generation in New England, were so unusual as to be greatly marked because all the four brothers had extraordinary qualities; but even they were in quite different fields of mentality. They were the four sons of one father. One was Cyrus W., who laid the first ocean cable; one was David Dudley, a distinguished lawyer, who prepared the first law code of New York State; one was Henry M., who was a distinguished editor and author; and the fourth was Stephen, who was for thirty-four years a justice of the supreme court of the United States. Certainly men are not equal in possessions, or in powers, or even personality. A few are skilled in music, and even that in different degrees, while many have no such quality, and cannot, by their utmost efforts, attain it. No, what we are wont to

call for want of a better term the gifts of God, are not evenly dispensed. The qualities of leadership are only bestowed here and there. If we assume that all are equally deserving,—which we would not assert,—there are wide chasms. And so we must understand the parable of the talents. It may be said we all are under the like duty to make the best use of our opportunities, but certainly we do not all begin with the same capital. Manifestly then, we have not equal responsibilities, and God does not expect of us results mathematically equivalent. Horace says the art of poetry is born, not made. Physicians, despite their best efforts, are not equal in the faculty of diagnosis, and all lawyers are not equal in what is known as legal judgment. Some men have an instinctive apprehension which we are prone to call "uncanny," while others never attain it. The faculty of teaching is pronounced in some, and wholly wanting in others. No, we are not all equal in the gifts which God Himself bestows. We can at least thank God for what we have, and use it well; and we can console ourselves with the assurance that our responsibilities are also measured by our talents.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. The first query we should solve is whether we individually have five talents, or ten, or one.
2. The greatest natural gifts are often wasted; this is so often seen that we are led to expect it. The spectacle of powers fully used is rare indeed.
3. The more common human tendency is to underestimate our gifts, and to compare them with the gifts of others whom we specially admire, fretting until we become discontented, and deem it useless to try.

4. General Grant lived a humble life, in the belief that his qualities were ordinary, until a great emergency lifted the veil, and he found himself able to be of immense service to his country.
5. Moody was, in early years, a shoe salesman, conscious not of great power but only of an intense *desire* to be useful; and in doing his best he came to realize that God had fitted him for extraordinary service.
6. Theodore Roosevelt was delicate in health, but of great energy and persistence; his faculties grew by constant effort until he became both strong and great.
7. But many a man and woman, conscious of only a single talent, has lived a life of usefulness, and made a mark, by service and example, which many more brilliant ones have had cause to envy.
8. This has rarely been attained without constant effort to capitalize his talents,—few or many;—and many to whom much has been given have wasted it by sloth or lack of courage.
9. Yet the will is weak, and if one has no other reliance his life is likely to be characterized by bitter lamentations.
10. Robert Burns, with all his sweet and penetrating and tender poetic faculties, could only fall and struggle up and fall again.
11. Bunyan, with a most humble start, by reliance on God and his own endeavors, set a mark which has attracted and led and urged many a weary soul since.
12. And Watts, so slight and frail of body that he was the object of sneers and laughter, set the christian world to singing and praying, and lifted many a burdened spirit from its slough of despond to the Delectable Hills.

LESSON L

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Read Luke 10:25-37

BACKGROUND:

THE lawyers of Christ's day were quite familiar with the law of Moses, including the commandments. It was their constant study, and many acute commentaries had been made upon it. The Jewish bible of that day, with all these wise reflections in it, was a composite of Jewish learning. It was history, prophecy, law, poetry, hymnology, and philosophy. The lawyer, therefore, who put the question to Jesus was not seeking to learn the obligations of the law. He was probably putting to him one of the puzzles of the day, to test (tempt) him. On Jesus' challenge he gave, fully, a summary of the commandments, and was told that he needed nothing further. He then fell back on another question, doubtless the subject of many quibbles, and asked,—“to justify himself,” who was—within the meaning of that commandment—his “neighbor.” The parable answers this by ignoring all close constructions, and indicating that what we know as the “Golden Rule” is the simplest test, and that both lead to the same result.

The Samaritans were originally pagan, imported to occupy the lands from which their Israelitish owners had been expatriated. For long centuries they had been residents of Palestine, and had grown into a confident faith in Jehovah, but the Jews could never forget their origin. They were not Abraham's seed, nor, in the

Israelitish view, entitled to the benefit of the promises of God. It seems probable that the priests and the Levites, quite familiar with the commandment, and not intending to disobey it, applied to the specific case some interpretation of the word "neighbor," which did not include Samaritans, or perhaps not the injured person, though not a Samaritan. Jesus said, in substance, that any one, of any race, who was in present need was a neighbor, and probably for the first time the light broke in upon the lawyer, who was an open-minded man, and he saw it so clearly that he phrased it himself. Thus he saw, as later Peter did with equal difficulty, that God intended no distinctions of race to govern his dealing with men, or theirs with each other.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. The lawyer's question was,—"What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" The same question was put on another occasion by a young man of wealth and standing, probably not a lawyer, but eager for an answer.
2. Both of them knew the answer in the terms of scripture, and both of them had tried to apply it, but found some essential feature lacking, and longed to know why.
3. Both were aware that the *whole duty of man* is found in the ten commandments.
4. The Jews condensed, as Jesus himself did, the principles involved into two:
 - (a.) Duty toward God (the first table);
 - (b.) Duty toward man (the second table).
5. Jesus said the first was "the great commandment."
6. But the second, he said, is "like unto it."
7. Both together make up man's true relation to his Creator and his brethren.
8. The lawyer had no trouble in understanding the first.

9. The second was also easily understood except the definition of "neighbor."
10. To explain this, Jesus stated a case of urgent need, and showed how it was dealt with by three distinct classes of people.
11. Two of these were trying, probably earnestly, to live up to the first table, and perhaps had no set purpose to ignore the second, but construed it strictly and literally, and thought it enough to avoid an overt breach.
12. The third (the Samaritan), may have been ill informed about his duty to God, but he had a kind heart, and saw only the need of a fellowman, though of another race.
13. It is a good illustration of the real meaning of the second table, and covers and complies with all the commandments, from the sixth to the tenth.
14. Thus this parable imprints on the heart and conscience, as well as on the mind of any reader, the breadth and length of the second table of the law.

LESSON LI

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

Read Luke 16:20-31

BACKGROUND:

WHEN Jesus desired to speak specifically about facts or conditions, he knew well how to do so. He also knew how to reach, by picture or parable, a dull apprehension, or a mind hardened by pre-judgments. So when he desired to impress the spiritual nature of his kingdom he stated it in many forms: It is like yeast; it is like a mustard seed; it is like a merchant seeking pearls, etc., etc. In this parable he paints, in colors and characters they would understand, the difference, in the future state, between the peace of those who, trusting in God, have had few blessings in this life, and those who, having more of the good things of this life, have laid up nothing to be enjoyed hereafter. By way of description, he used the common thought of those to whom he spoke, as he did when he described the unjust steward, the nobleman and the gifts of the pounds, the prodigal son, and many others. The essence of this parable seems to be the teaching that this life is not all; that in the next there is to be judgment, and reward and punishment accordingly; that humanity has adequate materials for choice, and the failure to prepare for the future is wilful; also that the results which follow are to be determined by what takes place on earth, and that they are inevitable and unchangeable. The lifting of the veil, to give worldliness and selfishness a glimpse of the result, is not by way of

threat, for it offers the chance while this world continues, to repent and reverse. So that if a mortal man really wishes to challenge God he shall at least do so with full knowledge and ample warning. It is like the appeal of God by Ezekiel,—“Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die.” It evidences again the frequent assertion of the scripture that God is very kind, and “takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked”; but man is independent, and God will not compel, though he will invite and urge and warn.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. Are distinctions of wealth and place to be found only in this world?
2. Distinctions as to possessions, it seems certain, can only be found here; but differences in quality are continued to and in the world to come. Not all are equal in attainments and capacity even in that world, as we are plainly told by Paul in 1 Cor. 15.
3. It was not because one was rich and the other poor that Jesus made the distinction found in this parable. In all ages,—and now,—there are rich men who are servants of God, and poor men who are not. Abraham was rich,—and David and Isaiah.
4. Dives prided himself on his wealth. He lived a selfish and ungodly life. He went to the place of torment not because he was rich but because he was unworthy.
5. He was one of those of whom Jesus said in another place (Luke 6:24),—“Ye have received your consolation.” Lazarus looked forward to his.
6. So it is with those who pray in public—“to be seen of men.” They have their reward, said the Saviour. They seek one kind of satisfaction and get it. Why should they complain if they get no other?
7. Note, however, that many of the comforting sayings of the Gospel, and its pictured hopes, to be enjoyed in the future, are for the poor, which we take to mean the poor in spirit.

8. Those of the rich who elect to seek the pleasures of this world, only, get their consolation in that form, and do not while here feel the need for comfort hereafter.
9. The chief lesson intended by this parable seems to be that the condition at death is *fixed*, and cannot be changed.
10. Verses 27 to 31, in which a plea for a special messenger from the dead to Dives' living brethren is denied, are a warning, and doubtless founded on a solemn truth. There is reason to believe that such a messenger, though terrifying, would not be convincing. Such was the case where the Father spoke to Jesus at his baptism; some who heard said it thundered; others said it was an angel speaking. The solemn fact was that the spectacular utterance out of the sky was not wrought into life and used, but was explained away.
11. It is natural enough to suppose that an abnormal occurrence would be convincing, while even the most explicit assurances are not, even though supported by witnesses sufficiently clear. But such is not common experience. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."
12. The conditions in the other world form, or once did form, an interesting subject of inquiry. Doubtless if Jesus had deemed it, in its details, important to humanity, he would have been explicit about it. Many things are implied, or at least suggested, and the construing and enlarging of these to make a theory is not forbidden, and often gives grounds for glowing anticipations.
13. Such are the inferences from our Lord's last words in John 14; but these should be held tentatively, until we have clearer light. As far as Jesus went we can safely go, but beyond that our speculations have no other basis than hope and strong desire.
14. Yet we deceive ourselves if we hope that in another world God will treat lightly the negligence and wilful rejection which he so strongly condemns in the present life. We can infer without this parable, and know quite clearly with it, that in another existence the evil are not rewarded, nor their rebellion condoned. There is a difference. It cannot be otherwise.

LESSON LII

FAITH EVIDENCED BY WORKS

BACKGROUND:

I WONDER how many christian people are sure of their faith. A man with large resources, for instance; he moves along comfortably, and thinks he trusts God for his daily bread. But when you ask him to give largely to a christian enterprise he hesitates, or refuses,—because he doubts whether he can replace it. What do you infer about his faith? Is it in God or in his resources? Perhaps in both. Like the woman who was run away with by an intractable horse, and jumped out. Of course she was injured. When asked why she did not trust in God she said she did *until the breechband broke*, and then she jumped. Probably she did in fact trust God, but she also kept an eye on the breechband.

My father and a long chain of ancestors were country preachers. I remember many good and precious things about them, but nothing impressed me more, then and now, than the genuineness and confidence of their faith. How earnestly and trustingly they prayed; and they had to have faith, for they had no bank account, and many of their parishioners were but a poor dependence in times of financial hardship; and yet as their children came, and the need became greater, their faith seemed stronger. Well, why not? If God has indeed the power and goodness we attribute to him could he not and would he not see that their wants were supplied? It seems easier to pray earnestly and trust hard when

you have no other resources. Is prosperity indeed an obstacle to that kind of faith? Does it not seem true that deep religion is at its best when times are hard? A gentleman once told me an illustration of the kind of doubts which beset humanity. A small boy visited his uncle who lived on a farm. He had a little calf which caught the boy's fancy. He wanted to take it home but his uncle was hardly willing. He said, "My boy, you leave this calf here, and pray to God to send you one." The boy hesitated, and then said,—"Uncle, you give me this one and *you* pray for another." Has indeed faith become more academic and less confident? Has it not come to be a prevailing doctrine that faith is speculative, and only possession sure?

It seems to me that among our churches and their contemporaries,—especially among the smaller and weaker churches, the constant struggle to maintain their branches of work on an adequate basis is a commentary on the earnestness of the conviction which prevails among the people.

I was out in Colorado one summer,—at Manitou, if you want particulars,—and attended on Sundays a little church where a small gift was received with such thankfulness that I was moved to call on one of the active church officers. I asked him how their church was getting along. He answered that in winter, when the tourists stopped coming, they had good congregations. Their people attended well; but he said they then had no money. In the summer, when the tourists made constant calls on them, they had money but couldn't come to church.

Such is the story of many a small rural church, and such the discouragements of many an earnest pastor.

Brethren, how many of you who read this are willing to part with your money in hand and trust God to see that you do not suffer by it? It was James, the apostle of works, who said, "Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show you my faith *by* my works." God said by his prophet, "*Try me; try me,* and *see if I will not open the windows of heaven and pour blessings upon you till there will not be room enough to receive them.*"

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. If "Faith" is considered merely as a noun, for definition and comment, its practical uses would be as large in scope, and as difficult to define and apply as,—for instance,—the practical uses of philosophy. Here the word means, in our colloquial sense, confidence in God.
2. Our inquiry therefore is whether that kind of faith is useful, and if so what beneficial use can be made of it.
3. The definition of the attributes of God which justify man's confidence are sufficiently stated in that title in the Westminster Catechism, which has been quoted elsewhere.
4. Briefly it assumes an eternal God is infinite in his attributes, and also omnipotent and omniscient, and full of love for his creatures. This being reliably known to mankind, faith is natural, both for the things of the physical and the spiritual personality.
5. Man being a creature of conscious needs, most of which he cannot supply for himself, has no excuse for an inadequate faith unless he doubts the existence and nature of God.
6. Indifference or lack of conviction leaves man to drift with no anchor, no rudder, no compass. While the winds are fair and the sea smooth he can go on comfortably enough if he can convince himself that he has no need of a haven of entry.
7. But everyone, by observation, and at last by experience, must confess that the winds are sometimes tempestuous, the waves high; and his troubles are sure to begin, and they will press him hard.

8. What then? Heart or mind will wander here and there, sweeping his world of knowledge and experience for comfort and aid; but neither he nor his friends can promise or furnish relief. Though he weep till his heart break the sky remains brass and the earth dust.
9. Where can support or comfort be found? Stoics learned to take their afflictions with grim self-restraint. But sickness or loss or death of friends, or breaches between friends, went on nevertheless, with no light and no hope.
10. Such is the condition, and has always been, when God was not known and trusted; but when that light shone peace came, and hope and assurance. Separations were not forever, and even death was the introduction to a better world.
11. Who would not choose to have a powerful friend in his affliction, a paradise in the future, and a God of grace and tenderness to guide and support while the voyage lasts.

LESSON LIII

FAITH PLUS WORKS

Read James 2:14-26

BACKGROUND:

LOYALTY and love, goodness and kindness, faith and works,—how easily and naturally they flow together, and how inadequate and unconvincing they are when alone. They are Siamese twins, born together, and incapable of separation. A worldly friend of mine once said, after listening to a very logical and well phrased sermon, “He would be a good preacher if he only had a little piety.” Martin Luther did not like the book of James. He said it was straw. It seemed to him to unduly stress works, whereas Luther was teaching that it is faith alone that saves. We do not now understand James to teach otherwise, but only to characterize and define the kind of faith which saves. He says,—show me thy faith *without* thy works, and I will show thee my faith *by* my works. That there is a kind of faith which does not produce fruit and is inadequate, is taught also by John, who says—“By *this* shall all men know that ye are of Christ because ye love the brethren.” And Jesus also said—“The devils also believe and tremble.” It is not for us here to attempt a definition of faith, but the Bible classes are filled with busy men and women who need to see that the gospel binds together,—as Jesus did in his summary of the ten commandments,—belief in God and the graces of the spirit. James was a brother of Jesus, and spent some thirty years in familiar contact with him. It is to be supposed

that he was always impressed with his holiness and blamelessness, so that when at the resurrection he learned that Jesus was God he saw no inconsistency. But he did not believe that his life and quality were those he had been taught to expect in the messiah of prophecy until after the resurrection. Like many other Jews he had been taught a theory of the messiahship of a different type, and it required the brilliant light from the open tomb to correct his error. Having become convinced, and using his great abilities for the promotion of the new faith, the thing he saw most clearly was that faith could not be genuine unless it merged naturally into a daily life which conformed to its professions; and this led at last to his own confession of faith, in which works are the blossom and the fruitage.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. The coupling of faith and works is in no degree artificial. In nature as well as in experience figs cannot grow from thistles.
2. The fig tree was cursed by the Master and withered away because its normal function was to bear fruit, and it produced only leaves.
3. That Jesus applied this also to human conduct is shown by the parable of those who arrived at the wedding after the door was closed. They proclaimed their loyalty, saying that they had done many works in his name. But he said, "I never knew you." They had one quality of loyal service but not both.
4. And so in the parable of the judgment the lord of the world rejects some who supposed themselves his friends because they had done nothing for the brethren.
5. What then are the tests of true adherence to the gospel of Christ? Some say belief, and cite Paul as authority. He certainly so taught, but he also demanded works, "Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."

6. Many in these present days deem works sufficient; and probably it is true that if the works are the veritable "fruits of the spirit" they would argue the presence of an adequate faith.
7. But in most cases the works men deem sufficient are no more than kindly service; the overflow of a friendly heart, and good of themselves, but not even tending to turn a sinner from darkness to light.
8. The plain truth, recognized by thinking people, is that good works and kindly deeds are not a sufficient price to pay for the christian's hope of endless bliss. They go a little way, but are not of the same currency.
9. If this life were everything, short and sad as it often is, good works, tested even by the worldly standard, would be enough; but the soul hopes and longs for something larger and better and greater. This is the gift of God, and only faith will win it.

LESSON LIV

THE PRACTICAL USES OF FAITH

Read Psalms 37:16

BACKGROUND:

No human being has ever been so great or so wise as to meet adequately the issues of life in his own strength. Every man, however eminent, has come to a crisis which he did not and could not anticipate. Caesar, after many triumphs, met his end at last by the daggers of envious men who deemed themselves as great as he. Napoleon, after many victories, found himself overwhelmed by the snows of Russia, and afterwards his greatest battle, though near another success, was lost by an unexpected rainstorm. Lee, never wiser or braver than at the very end, found his armies thinned and weakened to a point where they could no longer resist. God alone knows the future, and no other is wise enough to stand alone. The recent floods on the Mississippi River have overpowered all the resistance that man in half a century has built up. So it is in things small, as well as great. Human experiences have wrought us out a motto, "Man proposes: God disposes." We find this true when we plan each our own future. The great sculpture of St. Gaudens, in a cemetery at Washington, shows how sharply the surprises of life overtake us when we come to rely on our own efforts to anticipate the future. A sculptor is at work on a statue which is approaching completion. With his chisel he is smoothing out the features of a noble countenance, when he feels a cold and heavy hand laid

on his shoulder. He looks around to see Death, the great summoner, calling him away. The startled expression of his own face conveys a wonderful lesson to those of us who, in our moments of greatest assurance, find ourselves at the end of our opportunities.

As the disciples of Jesus said, when he sadly asked—"Will ye also go away," we can only say—"Lord, to whom shall we go?" It is one of the deepest comforts of the christian that he has learned to believe that God is at hand. He need not exert himself for riches,—God says—"The silver and the gold are mine." He need not cry out for comfort, for Jesus said "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." In all the perplexities of life, he is assured that if he calls God will deliver him. The old servant of God said—"I have been young, and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken."

So among the practical uses of faith are guidance, assurance and peace; and these are ready for every time of need.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. Faith is not a dream,—even a lovely dream. It is the assurance that there is an allwise being, and trust in that being.
2. We need not exert ourselves to define it, logically, but only seek guidance in time of need as one would seek the aid of the greatest expert in times of serious illness.
3. In my practice as a lawyer I think the most pathetic things I see are the doubts and fears of persons suddenly thrown into the midst of a great emergency for which they are unprepared.
4. Generally these are women, who are filled with anxieties because they do not know where to turn, or what step to take first.
5. Often I feel like saying "I will help you all I can, but why don't you ask God?"

6. Faith is generally supposed to be spiritual only, and God is not relied upon as he might be in the common perplexities of living.
7. It is a natural impulse when we are conscious of inadequate knowledge to resort to some one whose business it is to know,—a doctor in sickness; a lawyer in business troubles; a banker for financial advice.
8. The mere act of rolling off responsibility on one in whose wisdom we trust often gives us peace when we can see no light.
9. If then we believe confidently in God is it not prudent as well as comforting to turn the heart upward and ask for help?
10. Such and similar are the practical uses of faith; and every instance of its use makes it seem more natural and appropriate.
11. Pride or apprehension or doubt are the principal things which prevent us from making frequent use of faith as a resource.
12. The faith of mortals is often very weak; but we can at least put ourselves in the position of that sad parent in the time of Christ, who said—"Lord, I believe! help thou mine unbelief."

LESSON LV

THE JUDGMENT

Read Matthew 25:31-46

BACKGROUND:

THE doctrine of judgment and of future punishment or reward is a deep subject, and it behooves a mere layman to make no assertions about it beyond the plain language of the Master. Nor is it wise to be too confident. We are not called upon, even in the silent places of the mind, to decide whether another individual is saved or lost, or to group people in either class, by name or description. Knowing God, we are sure his basis of judgment will be just, and will be approved as such by the beings directly affected. Certainly this is so if we are right in supposing that each will judge himself, by a standard known or recognized as having always been applicable. It is evident that no judgment by newly prescribed tests can be just. When we are tempted to predict the future of any soul we should remember that we cannot know whether, in any given case, despite frailty and even wilfulness, there has been in the heart that modicum of faith,—“as a grain of mustard seed,”—which Jesus said would be sufficient. This therefore is not for us to decide, but for God, “who searcheth the heart.” When we anticipate the judgment it ought to be in respect to ourselves alone. Knowing it to be inevitable we must prepare for it. To do so we must assure ourselves what are the standards by which our dealing is to be tested, and how they are to be applied. We may well view that day with

terror, but it need not be apprehension. Resting on our faith, imperfect as it is, we may be confident. The crucified thief certainly was guilty of many sins, but because of his repentance and faith Jesus himself welcomed him into his kingdom. It is as certain as anything can be that the tests on the judgment day are not different.

Aside from revelation, the certainty of a judgment and a conviction of its nature and effect, rest upon and grow out of but two facts, I think. There are other elements, but they are inferences, yet inevitable, if our facts are right.

The facts are these:

- a. There is a future life, though the body and its physical senses will be gone; and that life may be joyous or forever filled with remorse.
- b. There is a just moral code, which ought to govern each man's action. Since it is the soul only which is to be saved or lost, the standards of conduct cannot be physical, but spiritual, and the mental attitude toward God is the most vital element in that case. This would be especially sound and reasonable if we concede each man's right to formulate that code for himself. If made abstractly, and in view of God's infinite attributes, it is not probable that they would differ much. Those elements laid down in scripture are not arbitrary, and our human judgment responds to their righteousness.
- c. *Somebody* must decide whether we have adhered to this prescribed code or not. If each man decided this for himself we would have just such a scene as Jesus depicts.

d. In the infinite life of the soul,—which is our second fact,—there must be a consciousness of success or failure, and consequently remorse or bliss. Does not man's own mind and heart, therefore, confirm the solemn assertion of scriptures as to a judgment and as to the part the human perception plays therein, and also as to its final outcome?

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. We should make no attempt to interpret the affirmative language of Jesus as if its meaning were in doubt. That could only be to alter its plain purport. It is only that which is in doubt which admits of construction.
2. He teaches that there will be a difference between the future of the righteous and the unrighteous.
3. He presupposes eternal *existence*; and that both the righteous and the wicked are to continue in some other world.
4. His language can only mean, I think, that *all* will be judged, and not the Gentiles only, nor only those who have rebelled against God.
5. All these, and the other particulars found in or inferred from the statements of Jesus, are not merely arbitrary, but are in harmony with our consciousness of need and of fitness.
6. Even among ourselves, living together on earth, we would have mere anarchy if there were no known standards of conduct, and if disobedience carried no penalties, and obedience brought no reward.
7. If, knowing those standards, we choose to live under them, justice cannot be done, to the good or the bad, unless they are enforced.
8. If our rebellious acts are deliberate, we may be truthfully said to have inflicted our own punishment if we disobey the laws under which we have elected to live.
9. In substance the moral judgments of God would be the same as our own; and it seems to be implied that the judgment and the penalties are known in advance, and the disobedient, con-

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scious of their own demerits, are pictured by Jesus as calling on the mountains to fall upon them.

- 10. Paul's argument in Romans is, in large part, founded on the consent of those who suffer penalties that the law which imposes them is not arbitrary nor tyrannical, but "holy and just and good."
- 11. Our fears of the judgment, and of the judgment day, grow largely out of a perverted picture of God as a tyrant, inflicting arbitrary punishment which we cannot anticipate or avoid.
- 12. The same might as well be said of those diseases or infirmities of the body which result from and inevitably grow out of disobedience of nature's laws.
- 13. As if one who deliberately exposes himself to inclement weather, and continues to do so, should charge God with arbitrarily sending tuberculosis.
- 14. We suppose it to be true that both the body and the soul of man are created to live at their best under certain known conditions, and a wilful departure invites inevitable suffering.
- 15. These then are not arbitrary punishments, either for physical or moral breaches, but grow out of them; and it may truthfully be said that they are challenged.
- 16. These are but arguments and inferences, and subject to human error. They are this writer's effort to explain to himself, and those who listen to him, how closely the judgments described by Jesus conform with those we pronounce upon ourselves.
- 17. So there may be a great judgment day though God is very good, and its penalties may be inevitable, in view of our wilful acts, without being harsh or arbitrary.

LESSON LVI

THE TRANSFIGURATION

Read Mark 9:2-8

BACKGROUND:

Is this narrative a simple tale of what men saw when their eyes were open and their minds working? Did it happen, or was it dreamed? For our present purpose this is especially important because if it is true then inferences may be drawn from it beyond its facts; but if it was a vision only, such inferences are unreliable. On its face it purports to be true. It does not, like some other events recorded in the biographies of Christ, stand alone, and require to be construed accordingly,—such as his meeting with Nicodemus, and his visit to Zaccheus. If literally true it teaches much about the glory of heaven, and about the long intervening spirit life of Moses, who died and was buried a thousand years before, and was heard of no more until he came with Elias and Jesus to the conference on Mount Horeb. Matthew and Mark both relate it as true, though neither of them was personally present. Peter and John assert that they witnessed the brilliancy of Jesus' glory, and they must have seen and heard those august saints of the older world; (see II Peter, Chap. 2:16-18; John 1:14; I John, 1:1, 2); and there is not in the narrative, or in those references, the least intimation that the writer is picturing a mere vision, or an aspiration, or a hope. John, who was one of the witnesses, says of his own biography of Jesus that it was written with the purpose of convincing his readers that

Jesus was the Son of God. He therefore meant it to be taken as true. Receiving it then on this simple basis, let us note first what it teaches of the magnificence of heaven. The disciples saw Jesus in an effulgence of "glory," which John has the same difficulty in describing in human language as in his vision of heaven in Revelation. He knows nothing earthly with which to compare it. What was it? It is generally assumed to be a shining; a luminosity; a brilliancy compared to white light. But light is composite. It includes every color of the prism, and is no less light when seen in the varied splendor of the rainbow than in the white light of the sun. When John describes in Revelation the magnificence of God he pictures a rainbow above the throne. Many of the figures in that great vision were clad in colors; and John's picture of glory, as he saw it in his vision, would not be complete without the memory of what he saw with his eyes on the mountain. In his description of the walls of the New Jerusalem much of its grandeur lies in its brilliant coloring. When then we read of the flashing out of heaven's glory on the mount of transfiguration it is not a mere interpretation of our own if we picture it as an outburst of color, as well as a blaze of luminosity.

We also learn much of the life in heaven. We know with our senses but one world, but our dreams of other worlds are not like the visible one; and this is no novelty, for even the present world has its distinct spheres. The creatures, great and small, who live in the waters know nothing of the world of the birds, whose home is in the air. So every physical faculty of human beings depends on surrounding conditions for its exercise, and the dullest of us is aware that somewhere and sometime

these conditions may be different, and our adaptation may differ accordingly. Even here we can apprehend sights and sounds beyond the ken of our senses, and we know they are equally real. Where does the radio find its means of communication? Where does the prism find its means of separating the colors in white light? Somewhere then there may well be a brilliancy of glory, beyond our present dreams, a spirit life with its own substitutes for the physical senses, and also a communication without speech, more ample and more fully apprehended than that of the present world. Why then should we doubt and hesitate when, in a special instance, this is allowed to dawn upon us?

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. Many things are taught us about Jesus and heaven by this event,—i.e., conscious life; ready communication; friendly acquaintance; mental activity; knowledge of surrounding events; some acquaintance with the great plans of God.
2. How eager we all are to know something about the other world, and how little we know.
3. We are well aware that the time approaches for us all when we must surrender the present and go out,—somewhere.
4. Must we really go without a reasonable hope, or without any sure picture of the thing we hope for?
5. Without the bible, and a real belief in its story, we would have no ground for more than guessing, like Cicero or Socrates.
6. Our faith then is all we have, plus the items of knowledge on which we found it.
7. So when doubters say it is not true we can answer, as the disciples did to Jesus,—“Where shall we go?” Where else can we find words of eternal life? Having this offered us, verified as few other things are verified, and no alternative, we are dull indeed if we reject it.

8. What we find here fits our needs and desires so perfectly, and harmonizes so well with all we know, that we pray to God to keep this assurance strong and clear.
9. So we believe this as we find it, and in it we have both hope and assurance.
10. Of all the hymns I know, the most inspiring and satisfying, words and music, is, to me,—“Faith of our fathers, holy faith; We will be true to thee till death.”
11. Yes, and after death, and forever more.
12. What then is heaven like, and what was Jesus like when he was there; and if we are admitted there what will we find?
13. It is, for one thing, a place of ineffable light. There is no sun or moon, but the Lord God gives light.
14. The apostles were not able to describe the glory of Jesus, even though they saw it, except by a comparison with the most brilliant things they knew. If this were all would it not be enough?
15. And Moses and Elias, who were human, and not divine, appeared also “in glory.”
16. Moses had been dead a thousand years, and Elijah seven hundred; but both were living yet.
17. They knew each other, and knew Jesus, and knew at least something of his expected death to the body, and return to heaven.
18. They still had all their human faculties,—of memory, mentality, and affection.
19. The disciples knew them, and recognized them; and though they themselves had gone to heaven centuries apart they knew each other.
20. Some people are puzzled to know how the disciples could see or recognize people now of the other world. They seem to suppose that the assertions of Conan Doyle and Sir Oliver Lodge of personal communication with those who have died are of the same order. Personally I think the true answer does not require so fantastic a solution. It really involves an exercise of miraculous power. If its actuality is doubted we must also doubt every appearance of Jesus after the resurrection, which

is amply verified unless we flatly contradict the evidence. So the appearance of angels to Mary; to Zacharias; to the disciples at Christ's tomb; the two men mentioned in Acts who announced the departure of Jesus; the strangers who communicated with Abraham; with Lot; with Samuel, and many others. Any other answer would require a repudiation of practically the entire scripture. For me the mere existence of man and his capacity to doubt is an equivalent miracle.

21. Does not the story of the transfiguration picture heaven as we would love most to have it; and does it not amply satisfy our highest hopes? Read and interpreted with John 14, does it not furnish a basis for a definite conviction?

LESSON LVII

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

Read Mark 11:1-19

BACKGROUND:

THREE are three imposing processions connected with the old city of Jerusalem which furnish interesting and instructive comparisons. For illumination we recall them here, but the first and greatest is the subject of our present lesson:

First, the simple but significant entry of Jesus, who came riding on a white donkey, as royal personages did in the ceremonial used in the days of simplicity among the Jews, reaching back at least to the time of the Judges. This was probably now used to indicate the royal status of the Prince of Peace.

The *second*, which we recall for comparison, is the knightly concourse which accompanied the Kaiser of Germany in the days of his glory when, clad in shining armor, and riding on a milk white steed, he came into Jerusalem with flying penon through a rift made for him in the wall beside the old city gate, which he found too small.

The *third* was the entry of General Allenby, when he came as conqueror after the expulsion of the Turks in the recent war. He entered on foot, at the head of his officers, all marching with bared heads, following in Christian humility the path of the divine master.

The resurrection was the climacteric of the career of Jesus; regarded as the Lamb of God,—sacrificed for the sins of humanity. At that stage his work was done. He

himself said on the cross, "It is finished." But regarded as the predicted king of the Jews doubtless the triumphal entry was the climax. He rode on the emblematic white donkey; he was welcomed with hosannas by the multitude who shouted, in the words of the 118th Psalm: "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." This was the chant which the Hebrews used on many occasions as they approached officially the city gates in solemn procession. It fitted into many occasions of public rejoicing, and was the natural expression of greeting to the messiah. When the procession ended at the temple Jesus entered, and as his indignant eyes and ears caught the chaffering usually found in the bazaar, in the changing of alien money for coins used in the temple service, and in the purchase and sale of doves for sacrifice, he asserted and exercised the functions of royalty, not only by rebuke but by forcible expulsion. Those who shouted themselves hoarse in the great processional evidently regarded it as the first stage in the establishment of the new Jewish kingdom which should, when it attained its maximum, be "greater than that of Solomon." In this aspect it was the very crest of Jewish history. The fact that it was on an erroneous assumption, and not unanimous, and not permanent, does not alter the fact, as we know it now, that the messiah predicted for more than four thousand years, and who all that time had been the constant hope and expectation of the Jews, had at last arrived, so that the enthusiastic ceremonial, though then misunderstood, was logical and appropriate. Christians, even the very early church, nearest in time to this event, must have regarded it,—though physically ephemeral,—as emblematic of the sweep of the world to welcome Jesus as the Prince of a

spiritual kingdom, which should grow and increase until it should cover the earth. In this aspect it is a good picture of the nature and quality of the kingdom of God on earth. The gilding and elegance of human royalty is not needed. The king is worshipped and obeyed because of his inherent majesty, his royal attributes, and his high and gracious personality. To these we add the fact that those who now sing his praises have received from him many gifts, and have the promise of many more. The book of Revelation is full of worship much like that of the triumphal entry, but spiritualized and adapted to be a fit greeting for royalty in its greatest glory. In the multitude of his subjects, both there and here, every heart is grateful for mercies already received, and hopeful for others,—deep and satisfying,—not yet attained.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. The Romans ruled in Palestine, but their authority was deeply resented.
2. It was the belief of the Jews that the messiah would announce himself as king, and that this would begin a revolt against Roman rule.
3. This did not happen, and yet an open and conspicuous announcement of the messiahship of Jesus was natural, and was anticipated.
4. According to the prophecies the messiah was indeed to head a kingdom; and John's announcement of Jesus was that his kingdom was at hand.
5. Yet Jesus had labored much to show that his kingdom was not one of force or warfare, but of peace and brotherly love.
6. So when he made his entry riding on an ass, the symbol of a quiet life, instead of a horse, the symbol of knighthood, he proclaimed the peaceful character of his rule.

7. The people recognized the official character of this processional, and sang the songs of Zion as they marched.
8. As he had theretofore hidden himself, and kept away from Jerusalem, because “his hour was not yet come,” I suppose this public entry may be regarded as a kind of challenge to the official Jews, who did not acknowledge his messianic character.
9. He knew that now his hour *was* come, and at the supper with his disciples the very next day he said to Judas,—“What thou doest, do quickly.”
10. The joy of the people was ephemeral, and soon subsided;—why?
11. I suppose because the spectacular features they expected when their predicted ruler should come were lacking they were disappointed, and they were chagrined at their mistake in supposing this was he, and that he was about to take up the sceptre.
12. If the sky had blazed with lightning and roared with thunder they would have been more confident. Some such thing, as on the night Caesar was slain, would have seemed to them appropriate.
13. So they scattered, and left him to himself, the procession ending at the temple.
14. For the second time he drives out of the temple the merchants and money changers, as he had done once before, when he said—“My house is a house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves.”
15. This expulsion, effected with the emblems of power, was itself the assertion of a royal and also priestly authority over the temple and its precincts.
16. But here the royal entry ended, and he went quietly back to Bethany “with the twelve.”
17. What then? Was it all over? Had they been mistaken? Yes, if indeed the coming of the messiah was to overturn the Roman rule, and set up on its ruins an earthly empire like that of Solomon.
18. The hostility to Rome was deep, and even deadly, lacking only power to make it bloody. Looking for a messiah who should take up the sword, their perverted view of his function was

doubtless the cause of this enthusiasm, though the officials even then regarded it as mistaken, yet if they had been prepared for a spiritual kingdom, and a Prince of Peace, the same kind of a procession and like shouting and chanting, would have been natural and appropriate, though with a different motive.

19. As in many other instances in Jewish history the people did wiser and more fitting things than they knew, and so from that event dated the public assumption by the messiah of his long promised functions.
20. The mistake was not in the fact, but only in the erroneous notion that the messiah was to be a Jewish sovereign, instead of the spiritual head of a restored humanity.

LESSON LVIII

THE HEALING MINISTRY OF JESUS

Luke 13:10

BACKGROUND:

HUMAN life is short. Ultimately the body wears down and out. In the nature of things it cannot be indefinitely prolonged. Every organic thing in the universe commences in the small, grows to its maximum, diminishes and dies. So also is the human body. Of dust it is made, and to dust it will return. No instance is mentioned in holy writ, and none has been known to man, in which, in fact or in promise, the body becomes, or is expected to be, itself perpetual. The longest lives have come to an end, and the bible and other history records, of this one and that one,—“he died, and was gathered to his fathers.” The healings of Jesus, and even his miracles of restored life, were temporary. Lazarus, the son of the widow of Nain, the child of the ruler, all must die again, and they have died. It is the soul alone which is like God in this respect, that it cannot die. It seems that Jesus did not regard a prolonged earthly life as in itself a blessing. His healings then were especially to indicate his loving sympathy with them in pain, and also to evidence his divine power. John reported some of the most significant, including the raising of Lazarus, and referred to many others, but he said he did so “that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ.” The familiar story of “The Wandering Jew” is a thrilling picture, though fiction, of the sad life of one condemned for his sins to

carry about his human body perpetually, and unable to die, even in war or pestilence. The doubt we may be permitted to speculate about is only whether human bodies could be perpetual if not broken by accident or disease, invited by careless or wicked living. Probably this is answered by the reply of Jesus to his disciples in Luke 13, where his disciples asked if human suffering was because of sin. We at least can be sure that our pains are felt by a sympathetic master, and if we cannot merely disappear like Moses and Enoch and Elijah, or fade away like Jacob and David, at least the bodily afflictions of humanity are the breaking up of physical functions, and will merge into glory so satisfying that those will be forgotten.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. On the occasion mentioned in Luke 13 Jesus was *teaching*:—in the synagogue.
2. Teacher and audience sat on the floor in oriental style. The ruler of the synagogue was there,—full of a sense of responsibility for reverential worship. He was in charge of the manuscripts of the Old Testament, and the Talmud; very rigid; very orthodox, from his Jewish standpoint.
3. I wonder what Jesus thought. We have only one of his sermons. That one, the first and last recorded, was about the prophecy of Isaiah concerning himself, and announced its fulfilment. But three times, on the Sabbath day, he gave his views about its proper purpose.
4. And how intently the audience listened; they said to each other that he spoke as one having authority; as never man spake.
5. In one instance it is said that the eyes of all that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.
6. And this poor woman, who could scarcely walk, was there. Probably she arrived among the first, so as to get a front seat,

for he saw her. She must have been very intent, to so attract his attention and move his compassion.

7. She must have had faith like the others whom Jesus healed, for he pitied her, and called her out before them all, and laid his hands upon her and healed her. And she knew where to give the praise,—for she “glorified God.”
8. Her healing,—how immediate it was, and how complete:—“She was made straight.”
9. Jesus said Satan had bound her. This meant that, in her case at least, it was not the will of God that she should continue so deformed.
10. Is deformity or sickness always contrary to the will of God? Some cases are certainly the results of sin; some are the results of wilfulness; some are mere carelessness; some of the fault of the sufferer; some by the fault of others.
11. The human machine is *not intended* to be perpetual. Ultimately it will *wear out*, even if there be no accident or sickness.
12. God certainly *permits* sickness, and often it is good for the soul, but the fact that Jesus healed so many shows that he regarded it as not always the will of God; or at least not the will of God that it should continue.
13. It may not be easy to *get rid* of it, but it seems certain that by observance of the laws of God (often called the laws of nature), it can frequently be avoided,—if not always.
14. This woman became straight and glorified God. Have you done that? Did you when you had that case of typhoid; or that congested appendix?
15. You never knew, or knew of, anyone who lived beyond a period easily comprehended in years. Then why speculate about it? In your case also the body is mortal. Then prepare for the end; but it is lawful and also wise to prolong it and preserve its high capabilities as long as you may.

LESSON LIX

THE MAN BORN BLIND

Read John 9

BACKGROUND:

TO ME the human eye seems the most wonderful item in the mechanism of the body. Aside from its uses, its beauty and brilliancy is its most striking characteristic;—What is it that glows and sparkles so? It is life. But what is that, and where does it come from? How does the eye get its power of adaptation, its capacity to expand or contract,—to focus at once on things distant and things near at hand? The photographic lens is its nearest mechanical imitator, but those who use this most know best its limitations. A man cannot even make an eye or any imitation of it adaptable, or even automatic, let alone make it live. Who then makes it live? Who can explain life, without God? I have been reading the theories of some scientists designed to explain the natural origin of life. Some say it is chemical—probably; but this only moves it back another degree, for it is necessary to explain where the chemical elements got their quality.

This blind man was *born* without vision. Alas, he was not the only one. Some eyes are by disease shaded as it were by a veil, called a cataract, some by the hardening of a nerve, some by an injury. Sometimes that affection does not destroy the faculty of vision, but may be,—as many have been,—cured. But this man had never possessed the *facilities* for vision. With him the miracle was not one of skill, but of creation. Both he

and his parents, and also John, the author, lay stress on this. The parents said, "We know that he was born blind." And he said,—"Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind."

Aside from the wonder of the miracle is the persistence of the struggle of the priests to explain it without God. Being unable to do so convincingly they resorted to personal authority, and averred that the man and his parents were both wrong. They refused to consider either arguments or facts to the contrary,—"Dost thou teach us?" they said. But the simple underlying fact remained, and this was enough for the man himself, who said, "This I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." The act was one of creation, and none but God has that power. Such were many other of Christ's miracles,—the raising of Lazarus, the healing of the lepers, the increase of the loaves and fishes, etc. Whatever others might say, those who were the objects of the miracles of power had the test of *experience*, and they, at least, knew the answer.

This is the simplest, the most direct, and the most convincing of all arguments to those who trust the evidence of their own senses. Such was the preaching of the apostles. They called themselves "witnesses." They said, "Our hands have handled the word of life"; "We were with him in the holy mount." The walking on the water is explained by some as a vision of the disciples, but it was very real to Peter. Even yet the evidence of experience is more convincing than argument; and in evangelistic preaching or teaching nothing is so appealing. Psychologists labor to explain human mental operations, and each new hand at the bellows may ven-

ture a new theory. As abstractions some of these are interesting, and the reader selects according to his personal taste; but no one is really convinced in conflict with his personal experience. Viewing things from the outside our physical senses sometimes mislead us. I once saw a man carry his own head on a tray before him; but it was a trick, and I knew it. So also did he. But no one is in doubt whether he is blind or can see; or whether he has one hand or two; or whether he is well or ill; happy or sad. The cause may be open to doubt, but not the effect. So though this miracle was in itself simple, it was convincing to the man himself; and equally so is a change of heart.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. The fundamental question to one looking for the truth about God is one of fact.
2. Most of the facts of scripture, when ascertained, are themselves convincing. If true they cannot be explained without God.
3. Thus, as to most of the underlying questions of religion, one is brought directly to the query whether he will believe them or not.
4. If he believes them he is led direct to God. Andrew's test was "Come and see."
5. Such also was the blind man's test,—"This I know; I was blind, and now I see."
6. If then the story of this miracle is true, then since the thing done is superhuman the proof that Jesus exercised divine power is conclusive.
7. This was John's method of proof of Christ's divinity when he said of his narrative of miracles,—"These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God."
8. To stress the fact that the power exercised in this cure was superhuman, it is said over and over, by the author, and by

the blind man himself, and by his parents, that he was *born* blind.

9. The eye is probably the most striking physical feature of humanity. In its appearance it is brilliant, glowing, shining; it smiles or frowns; it scorns or appeals; it laughs or weeps.
10. In its operation it is adaptable, adjustable, variable, without conscious effort.
11. It presents to the brain a correct picture of what passes before it, with movement, color and detail.
12. Though sound at birth, many of its functions may be obscured or interrupted by disease, such as cataract, nerve congestion, or wounds of a certain class, which may for a time interrupt vision without being necessarily incurable.
13. An apparent miracle restoring human vision therefore may be a token of skill without being superhuman.
14. But, as the blind man said, "Since the world began was it not heard that any man hath opened the eyes of one that was *born* blind."
15. And his parents said, "We know that he was *born* blind."
16. Thus, the fact being undeniable, and the power exerted being in its essence superhuman, there was nothing left even for the pharisees, refusing to accept the inevitable result, but the alibi, "Dost thou teach us?"
17. To some scholars the very simple proposition which cuts across lots, assuming a given status of facts, is not acceptable. They often seek rather the complex, which, even if true, is roundabout, and difficult to understand. Some are driven to the answer of the pharisees,—"Dost thou teach us?" Yet the best proven truths are among the simplest,—such as the multiplication table, or the cardinal points of the compass.
18. For the blind man himself there was the assurance of experience, the most convincing of arguments. From that time onward he could not doubt,—"This I know; I was blind, and now I see."

LESSON LX

JESUS' LAST WORDS

Read from John, Chapters 14, 15

BACKGROUND:

IN THE world we are all conscious both of cares and duties. The first are for ourselves. The second are for others. It is sometimes deemed selfish and improper to think more or first about ourselves. Some idealists teach that our first and highest obligations are to others; but such is not the teaching of scripture. The summary of the commandments as given by Jesus makes consideration for ourselves the *basis of comparison* in judging of our relation to others. So also is the Golden Rule,—“*As ye would that they should do to you.*” Those who are not careful to be confidently assured as to their own standing with God cannot be, I am sure, in a frame of mind to apprehend the real needs of others; and if we cannot correctly diagnose their case, how can we prescribe the remedy? In this lesson the Master does both.

But quite beyond this goes his last message, and his last prayer with and for his disciples. The physical senses of man are the means by which he makes and maintains his contacts with the physical world. These are, for other uses, inadequate. They help but little in that phase of living which is most satisfying. Friendship, kindness, appreciation, sympathy, affection—none of these is within the field of the senses. These higher apprehensions, which his disciples knew so well but considered so little, Jesus tried to arouse in this

last interview to help them realize that God may be near though not visible; that Jesus himself could communicate with them, though not audibly; that the future home of the human soul might be very real, though not tangible; and that the friends who have already passed on, and are out of view, may still live conscious lives, and occupy homes,—adapted doubtless to their new condition,—into which their friends on earth will be welcome, and have their place;—“If it were not so,” he said, “I would have told you.”

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. Let not your heart be troubled; believe in me. Thus he said. Doubtless he knew that they need not be troubled, but they were:
 - a. About the sadness of life;
 - b. About the weakness of humanity;
 - c. About sickness and death;
 - d. About the unknown future.
2. And thus he prescribed the remedy: Believe in God; believe in me.
3. But Thomas had doubts about the place to which Jesus was going.
4. And Philip about the personality of God.
5. And Jesus said:—“Believe in God and in me.”
 - a. God, whom you have not seen; but whom I have exhibited;
 - b. Me, whose life and spirit and works you have seen.
6. Are these really remedies for the troubles which beset humanity?
7. This kind of “belief” is really the simplest thing in life, both in language, as Jesus expressed it, and as apprehended by the mind and the heart.
8. It is taking God and Jesus at their *face value*.
9. It is not a formulated creed, but an acceptance, like that of a child; and why not? The things we daily act upon are

accepted in a manner as simple as that; and pondering or investigating changes few, if any, of our fundamental beliefs.

10. That kind of faith is not a dream, nor an idealism, nor a mere aspiration. These would not be enough. It must be tenable and defensible; must harmonize with the known facts apprehended by the senses, and must conform to and meet the needs of humanity. For ages it has been found to answer all these tests.
11. It takes God as Jesus exhibited him:
 - a. With every best human quality magnified to infinity;
 - b. With perpetual life, reaching backward and forward;
 - c. With a home of never-ending delights,—called heaven, —to which his children may go;
 - d. With a few hints of its character and blessedness.
12. All these are received and absorbed by believing and accepting God and Jesus.
13. If we really take this in, and ultimately attain it, what more can we ask for ourselves, personally?
14. Does belief not fully satisfy?
15. We have, in our humanity:
 - a. A short life;
 - b. Many cares and sorrows;
 - c. Conscious inadequacy.
16. If we knew—
 - a. That a God of power and kindness is walking with us;
 - b. That our cares are temporary;
 - c. That we can have perpetual life, without mortal limitations;
 - d. And satisfying companionship forever;
17. Our troubles would be brief and easier borne.
18. The short life is lengthened if it merges into eternity; and this follows if Jesus is to be believed.
19. Our cares and sorrows are lost in the joys of Paradise if Jesus' statement is accepted.
20. Our conscious inadequacy is supplemented by the infinite power and love of God, if we may take Jesus' word for it.
21. Nothing therefore is lacking, in this world or the next, if the Lord is true and faithful.

22. And this would answer our inquiry whether the prescription of Jesus is a real cure for the troubles of the present, and can satisfy our human anxieties about the future of our friends and ourselves.
23. If God and Jesus have been found worthy and reliable then Jesus' remedy is ample—"Believe in God; believe in me."

LESSON LXI

THE LORD'S SUPPER

Read Mark 14:12-26

BACKGROUND:

IT is not new, but yet impressive, that every periodical festival or memorial day, purporting to celebrate a specific event, is in itself evidence of the verity of the original occurrence. If, for example, there had never been a Declaration of Independence, it would have been impossible to bring about its annual celebration. Such a practice could never have been begun, much less maintained, if its alleged origin was a fiction. It is not worth while therefore to argue, as if it were an open question, over the veracity of the historical event which the Passover feast purports to celebrate. Equally futile it would be to now consider whether, by the act of Jesus, that Jewish feast was converted into, or, as to the Christian Church, merged or lost in, a new memorial feast, to "celebrate the Lord's death, till he come." The fact of its continuous observance is one of the convincing arguments for the historical verity of the event, and we have only to see wherein the things done and said that night have in them yet elements,—practical or mystical,—useful in the great task of bringing back,—or opening the way for the return of,—the human race to the high estate it once held.

The Passover feast was to the thoughtful Jew a memorial of a great event. No Jew could partake of it without remembering the blood over the door that night in Egypt; the passing of the destroying angel on

his dread errand; the shrinking and shuddering of those within the house as they wondered whether their protection was adequate; their joy and thankfulness when daylight dawned, and they found their families secure. The hymn they had sung on the anniversaries of that occasion since the days of David,—the 115th Psalm,—and perhaps even earlier, and which Jesus himself sang with them at the momentous feast we are considering, was a chant of thanksgiving. So the new use which was grafted on the accustomed feast that night carries along with it now all those prior events and memories, as well as the features of promise and hope which were new that night, with their wider and more satisfying application. It was the blood of a new and diviner sacrifice which was to stain the lintel of the sanctuary thenceforward; and to the sad and yet sweet memories of divine protection embodied in the old covenant there were henceforth added the sacred sanctions which Jesus created, and as he explained to them its new uses, and its memorial significance, it sunk deep into the Jewish heart, so that all, old and new, not only reached back to that great night in Egypt, but stretched toward and into a new Canaan, the land of promise for the soul, still to be attained; and added, as a new reason for its observance by his followers, the Master's injunction,—“Do this in remembrance of me.”

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. It was Jesus' last night on earth. The next day his blood was to be shed, and he said so.
2. It was the old, old Passover anniversary, the yearly feast,—celebrated by the sacrifice of a lamb.
3. This one, however, was to commence a new feast, which was to be memorial in its nature, and perpetual. Its symbol also

was to be blood; but, the lamb being once slain, its recurrence was to be by symbol only.

4. This occasion was to be the Master's farewell, and he had longed for its fellowship,—“With desire I have desired it”—he said.
5. Like the former, it created a new calendar, both for the church and for the world. It was the birthday of a new kingdom, which rose out of the ashes of the old; “The king is dead,” cried the French, as one royal personage passed away and another succeeded,—“Long live the king.”
6. It points back to the first Passover,—which was followed by the rest, in long succession,—and merged into this: and thus is to be regarded as the fulfillment of ancient prophecy.
7. It was to be thereafter both a tie, to bind together the children of God, and a memorial, to recall and do reverence to Jesus, whom the slain lamb typified, and his life and death,—of his own choice, but pursuant to the old, old plan of God.
8. It assumes, for the old feast, a long history of annual celebrations, and also the known reason for its origin, each instance being a new assertion of the fact which gave it its original significance,—a finger pointing back.
9. Doubtless the recurring Passover feast was, in this instance, concluded first, for no mention is made of the lamb in the story of the Lord's Supper.
10. Since the feast of flesh was over when this one was created, the bread and wine of the memorial feast are the sole emblems of his broken body and shed blood.
11. Therefore the Passover was not *converted* into the Lord's Supper, but this was instituted afterwards, and separately, supplementing but also fulfilling it. It was a successor, serving at once as a climax and an interpretation of the original.
12. So the Lord's Supper became a sacrament (oath) of allegiance, which the old one was not,—and also a new and larger memorial.
13. It was to be continually revived, and also to be of perpetual obligation.
14. Its significance, therefore, is not small, but great,—oh, very great, and it can never fade away.

LESSON LXII

JESUS IN GETHSEMANE

Read Mark 14:32-50

BACKGROUND:

THE true theory of the doctrine of the atonement is, from a human standpoint, difficult to decide.

As with many other of the problems of the world,—divine and human,—we can afford to wait for light. We have before us, however, the attending facts, which as christians we accept and believe. Outside of the theological explanations, with which we, in teaching Bible classes, need not concern ourselves, there are useful lessons and inferences which we may know. If Jesus had been human, we could more easily supply motives for his acts and follow his train of thought. For example, the drowsiness of the three who were closest to him, and might have been expected to share his burden of sadness. Though they did not know, and could not, the sadness of the gap,—the first and greatest,—which here arose between him, as the sinbearer, and the holy God, his father, yet they knew that this was to him a crisis in his life, and that Judas was breaking away and was about to betray him,—whatever that might mean. A deeply sympathetic friend can share his friend's sadness even if he does not fully apprehend it. But here these three gave way to mere physical weariness, and slept while their Master endured the greatest sorrow of his life. And after being twice revived, they fell again the third time. Would you or I have done so? There is to us, and must have been to them, a tragic pathos in his

words when he said,—“Sleep on now and take your rest. Behold the hour is come.” I imagine that none of the three would ever be able to forget the shame of those sad words. The prayer of Jesus that this cup might pass has been taken very literally by some sincere believers, who have embedded in the wall in that old garden a well executed relief carving in which a rather modern cup is the principal feature, and it is implied that it is this very object which he sought to have removed. And on a large portion of the remainder of the garden plot a very costly church has been erected, the adornments of which carry out the same literal misunderstanding. It is hard to apprehend the mental attitude of sincere people who see so little where the history and the surroundings suggest so much.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. Jesus knew that his hour had come, and he well knew what that meant.
2. He knew that Judas would know where to find him, but he went there directly, and prayerfully awaited the climax.
3. At his glorification in the mount of transfiguration he had discussed with Moses and Elias “his death which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.”
4. The approach of death, therefore, was not a new or horrifying thought.
5. Many others,—mere men, like Nathan Hale,—have accepted a dreadful death without shrinking; and even Major André only asked that it be in a less ignominious form.
6. And it is in brave humanity, as it was with Edith Cavell, to receive with resignation that last blow, though conscious of innocence.
7. What then was it which led him to shrink, and pray to have it pass?

8. Was it not his consciousness that he was, in the course of his mission as redeemer, to be, at least for the time, *treated as sinful*,—carrying the guilt of humanity, though himself blameless?
9. And also that,—for the time at least,—his Father's face was to be turned away from him?
10. Such was in fact his experience. On the cross, he cried out,—“My God, why hast thou forsaken me?”
11. His closeness to the Father and his innate holiness were such that this was almost more than he could bear.
12. He was to be persecuted by his enemies, forsaken by his friends, and,—at least for a time—a sinbearer even to his Holy Father.
13. He knew that he could be delivered if he *demanded* it, but he only prayed for it “if God willed.”
14. But it was “for the sins of others”; and as he himself afterwards said, “It must needs be.”
15. There was no other way; and knowing this he had offered himself when a sinless sacrifice was needed. He said—“Lo, I come.”
16. So God, who was not able to deliver him, for the same reason that he, on the cross, could not “save himself,” sent angels to comfort him.
17. Thus it was said of him while he hung on the cross,—“he saved others; himself he cannot save.” As Paul said of his own “thorn in the flesh,” God’s answer to his prayer for relief was to give him strength to bear it.
18. These are the thoughts which burdened his heart in Gethsemane.
19. His human nature revolted, but his obedience did not fail, and it is for this that he will receive glory from the race of men to the end of time.

LESSON LXIII

THE WALK TO EMMAUS

Read Luke 24:13-33

BACKGROUND:

WHAT a profound disappointment it was to Christ's followers when he died! The stages to that point may have been these:—first, the growing belief that the clock of time had struck; that the true messiah had come; then the hope, even against some apprehensions, that the long desired new kingdom, like that of Solomon, would be set up; then the death of Jesus, and the shattering of that hope; “We trusted (said the grieved ones) that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel.” But now he was dead, and the day of hope seemed to be ended. If anything can justify depression and gloom the facts, as the two disciples on the way to Emmaus understood them, justified it. Even Peter said—“I go a-fishing,” and the other disciples said, “We also go with thee.” They must now go back to their workaday employment, and take up again the task of earning a living. But shortly a new revelation dawned on these two, as they walked with the stranger and listened to his words. Then they learned that their fears were all a misapprehension, and based on errors of fact. When these were corrected the light shone brighter than ever, and all their hopes were amply satisfied. But then, having this new light themselves, they remembered those saddened ones they had left at Jerusalem. They also must have the good news, and so these two, who had received this convincing

evidence that their sorrows were ill-founded, hurried back to the city,—weary as they were,—to tell the story there. The mystery however must have been to them even greater than before, for they had witnessed the crucifixion, and had seen the Master buried. Many cold people in this scientific age insist, like Thomas, that the death of Jesus and his resurrection are impossible; they will not be content unless the process is explained. Like those Jews who, when they heard the Lord's voice, said "It thundered." But these two men, though still greatly puzzled, had at least this convincing assurance,—they had seen him and heard him, and had broken bread with him. This was enough for the present. They would hope for clearer light. As the blind man whose sight had been restored,—though he could not answer the question how it was done,—had one convincing argument,—"This I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." Many of us, like the dog in the fable, lose what we have in the vain effort to get more.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. How greatly Jesus had changed since they saw him last.
2. By some means he had come out of the tomb,—no one knew how.
3. Until he revealed himself he was not recognized, even by those who knew him best.
 - a. Mary did not know him;
 - b. The disciples did not know him on the shore of the lake until his attitude and his fire of coals revealed him;
 - c. The two disciples on the way to Emmaus did not know him: "their eyes were holden";
 - d. In the upper room they did not know him until he asked to be served;
 - e. In the last chapter of John it is said "he showed himself";
 - f. To Thomas he said, "Touch me"; to Mary he said:—"Touch me not."

4. Therefore there was something unfamiliar and mysterious, even in his appearance.
5. Yet he was the same, and had the visible wounds in his hands and feet.
6. But he had also a new *physical* quality.
 - a. He came into the room to the twelve though the door was locked;
 - b. At Emmaus he appeared and disappeared;
 - c. At the ascension he rose through the air.
7. Where did he spend that intervening time?
8. Was he back with Moses and Elias?
9. Was he still with the penitent thief?
10. Whatever the marvelous change, and wherever he was, he had forgotten nothing, and knew them all by name.
11. Was this what Paul meant when he said,—(I. Cor., 15:43), “It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory.”
12. Is this such a body as we shall have?
13. Christ taught the two on the way by comparing the prophecies with the event.
14. He taught them faith in the promises of God.
15. And he showed that such faith involved acquaintance with the ancient scriptures.
16. When he explained, then they saw.
17. Is it not true now, that peace and assurance come by full understanding?

LESSON LXIV

THE FLESH AND THE SPIRIT

Read John 3:1-21

BACKGROUND:

THE distinction between the two departments of human personality is biblical doctrine, never stated so clearly or proved so amply as by Jesus in his talk with Nicodemus, and yet it is also a physical fact, easily observed by anyone who will use his faculties,—almost visible, almost audible, almost tangible. The two, though distinct, are interrelated at almost every point. The five physical senses comprise the contacts, or means of contact, of the body with the physical world, and one by one, or in pairs or groups, they may fail without affecting or reducing the apprehension of the mental or spiritual faculties. Helen Keller is an example. Except as she compelled herself mechanically she could neither speak nor hear. No one can suppose she would be less wise or kind or capable if she also lost her taste or touch. Pope, the poet, had a deformed body from early childhood. It is said that in his boyhood he was pertinacious in the search for information. "What is an interrogation point?"—he asked an older boy one day. The boy answered, with something like an innuendo, "A little crooked thing that asks questions." So Heine is said to have never been conscious of an easy or comfortable hour, and in the last years of his life was never off his bed. Yet with both the mentality was acute and also profound, the imagination active, and strongly pictorial, and their acquirements increasingly ample.

Conversely, there are instances known to us all where the physical body flourished more than normally when all mental and spiritual powers have failed. The wife of a prominent business man wholly lost her mind. Her husband placed her in suitable hands to receive every attention, and created a fund for her needs having a principal of four million dollars. The trustees reported last year that this had increased to eleven million dollars, after every need had been met, and every comfort provided. She is living yet, after some twenty-five or thirty years, though her able husband is long since deceased. She has no conscious wants, and only physical requirements. Thus the two classes of personal faculties may be separated, and often are. This interrelation may be best illustrated by the eye. It is the organ of vision, which is one of the five physical senses. Objects within its field are pictured on its retina, but it is the mind which, operating intangibly, inaudibly and invisibly,—aye even inscrutably,—apprehends and interprets what it sees.

What then? Is it hard to grasp the significance of the words of Jesus to Nicodemus? Is it not indeed impossible for the thoughtful person to miss it, or to doubt it?

We lose a great part of this lesson however if, apart from the physical body,—we fail to distinguish between the mental and moral faculties of the human mind. We concede that the mental faculties have standards by which to judge, and with which to compare, and they are more exact and even more demonstrable than the tests by which we judge or appraise the physical qualities. But all believers in a personal God,—Nicodemus, as well as Jesus,—have moral standards and criteria capable of at least equal certainty. Yet

many scientific men suppose themselves to be justified in judging of the origin of man's body by *inevitable* tests, but treat his mental and moral faculties as merely incidental, and assume their development with no more real evidence than certain scorings on the interior of fragmentary skulls.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. "A citizen of two worlds"; a personality with two phases; a single life, but fed from two sources; the senses of earth and the sensibilities of heaven condemned—or perhaps it is better to say permitted—to live together.
2. One might deem it impossible—abstractly—that the same being could be at the same time conscious of being drawn by aspirations for the God-like, and lured by the temptations of Satan.
3. Paul has vividly pictured the constant struggle between the two. In lay language Robert Louis Stevenson, in Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, has painted the same picture,—and strange to say nearly every man recognizes it as a portrait of himself.
4. This double personality is not a theological dogma, or a vision of dreamers. It is quite real, and easily observed even by one who does not hope for immortality.
5. Kindness, self-sacrifice, helpfulness,—these include appreciation of the troubles of others, and efforts to relieve them, as well as interest in their joys. How much these signify between friends. Yet they are not physical or worldly.
6. Whether these originate with religion or not, they are quite beyond the range of the physical senses. No animal has them. In humanity they are part of the higher personality, and if this is only a physical world it is hard to see where they come from.
7. So also those apprehensions which have no moral or ethical side, such as the love of music, painting, art or architecture, and the desire to excel in any of them, are among the higher human qualities, but have no physical basis.
8. Some say that sights and sounds reach human understanding through the nerves, which are physical. But if that were all the tom-tom would answer as well as the violin, and skill or melody would be nothing.

9. The power to appreciate, to translate and the thrill of grand combinations of sound, color or line, are among the higher sensibilities. No animal has them.
10. So humanity has two sides, only one of which has an earthly aspect. What of the other? It is lofty, and at least *fitted* for immortality, which the physical is not. If it did not come by accident, and can not wear out or run down, it must have been *planned* for immortality.

The New Testament

GROUP F

MEMORIAL DAYS, comprising the aids to memory furnished by such occasions, and the significance attached to them in the scriptures.

LESSON

LXV. MEMORIAL DAYS

LXVI. CHRISTMAS

LXVII. THE EASTER SEASON

LXVIII. THANKSGIVING

LESSON LXV

MEMORIAL DAYS

*Read of the Passover,
Exodus 12:1-3, 10-64;
Luke 22:15;
I. Corinthians 4:7, 8*

BACKGROUND:

THE memorial days having a religious significance and of general application are few. Those generally celebrated by the church are Christmas, Easter, and the Sabbath. Each of these celebrates an event, and therefore looks backward. Each also contains a promise, and therefore looks forward. In this respect they differ from certain of our national patriotic holidays, which merely look backward, and serve to remind us of the past. Such are Independence Day, Flag Day, Thanksgiving Day, etc. The difference may be indicated thus:—On Christmas Day the infant Saviour was born. In that respect alone, it celebrates an event; but as his coming was the consummation of God's promise to send a messenger to restore humanity to its primal likeness to God, it has a long future also, and thus contains a promise. Easter celebrates the Lord's resurrection, and therefore looks backward; but as he is to be by his own resurrection a type of that hoped for by his disciples, it also contains a promise. On the Sabbath it is said the Lord rested from his creative work; but as the Sabbaths of the saints are to continue until every day is a Sabbath, it looks both backward and forward. But further each of these is

evidentiary, and forms one of our most dependable proofs of the verity of the event they purport to celebrate. Easter is, for example, linked inseparably with the ancient Passover. The general celebration of that event by the Jews is not merely evidence but proof of the historic origin of the Jewish nation. For it is not conceivable that a whole people could have been brought to celebrate annually, for centuries, an event which had no foundation in fact. Another instance is the Jewish spring festival of Purim, which had its origin in the delivery of the Jewish race from the death to be accomplished under the command of Haman. Its setting is in the story of Esther. Its prolonged celebration, which has been observed this very year, proves to the ordinary mind the truth of that part, at least, of the series of historical events narrated in the book of Esther. An analogous instance is our Independence Day. It is not conceivable that the American people could have been brought to celebrate annually for a century and a half such a day if there had been no such event. Thus the very existence of these memorial days becomes convincing proof of the verity of the events themselves. Many others of our memorial days, such as Thanksgiving and Decoration Day, have no special evidentiary value, but help to stimulate patriotism and the sentiment of gratitude through the action of the memory. Such also are our own family birthdays, and those of the saints, which so many rejoice to celebrate. Certainly no gift of God to humanity does more to hold us faithful to the methods and attachments which we long ago learned to value; and memorial days and events stimulate and retain for us those precious sentiments which they picture and recall.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. Christmas it not merely a day of rejoicing and giving of gifts by common consent, but by it we have each year, for all these centuries, asserted anew the verity of Christ's coming.
2. Those who join in its celebration without a profession of faith in his verity or his messiahship have this sin also laid to their charge, that they wilfully close their eyes.
3. Those who question the verity of Jewish history, while admitting the long, long period in which the fact of the first passover has been asserted, surely cannot defend on the ground that evidence is lacking.
4. The Sabbath and its significance did not originate with the new pronouncement of the ten commandments by Moses, for even then the Fourth Commandment began with the injunction to "remember."
5. The religious and the historical significance of these memorial days are intertwined, and one cannot fairly be accepted and the other denied.
6. If we ourselves were seeking to remind humanity, at frequent intervals, of its divine origin and God's oversight we could not have done it with greater effectiveness than to recall by such memorial days the ties by which they are bound together.
7. Neither God nor man will willingly permit events of such deep significance to be forgotten; and no man can, in the judgment day, defend his failure in duty by the excuse, so common in other things, that he forgot.
8. No plea of God's prophets is so often repeated as "remember; remember"; and we have here another instance of the need of frequent recurrence to the fundamental principles which bind humanity to God.
9. This principle is applied politically. Certain of our state constitutions contain such a reminder, in this or similar language:—"A frequent recurrence to the principles of free government is necessary to preserve the blessings of liberty."
10. It is evident then that in order to completely lose our sense of dependence on God, and of his constant kindness, as well as the political liberties our fathers have won, we must succeed in abolishing our recollection and observance of memorial days and memorial events, as well as change our systems and tendencies for the future.

LESSON LXVI

CHRISTMAS

Read Luke 2:8-15

BACKGROUND:

WHEN Jesus came the day of Malachi was as ancient as the day of Christopher Columbus is to us. But at last, after that weary delay, the age-long prophecy was about to be fulfilled. It had been four hundred years since Malachi delivered his message. The impressive part of that message was a promise, as well as a prophecy; we can picture the prophet standing at the altar of God, and holding up his hand toward heaven as he proclaimed: “The Lord whom ye seek shall *suddenly* come to his temple;” and again, “Unto you who fear my name shall the sun of righteousness arise, with healing in his wings.” But there his message closed, and darkness fell on the world. No open vision, fairly verified, came again to the Israelites until after the Greeks under Alexander had spread over the world a single language, and until a single power, under the Roman eagles, had extended good roads and good government everywhere, and thus made travelling easy and safe. Then the messianic hope began to burn more brightly; the heavenly bodies themselves gave indications that the climax was near;—“we have seen his star in the east, and have come to worship him,”—said the astrologers. Then came John;—“the day-spring (dawn) from on high hath visited us”; thus Zacharias spoke of him. Mark also identifies him as the messenger described by Malachi, who should pre-

cede and prepare the way for the king. He quotes,—“behold I send my messenger before my face.” And then the dawn represented by John faded away as the “Sun of Righteousness” arose. John, exercising his function of herald, said of his relation to the coming king—as the morning star might say of the sun—“he must increase, but I must decrease.” The coming of the king, though unrecognized by the Jewish nation as a whole until the infant prince had reached man’s estate, was distinctly marked, first by the annunciation by Gabriel to Mary; then on Christmas Eve by the “Overture of Angels,” as Henry Ward Beecher called it, and the salutation and promise by the herald angel to the world,—“behold I bring you good tidings of great joy.” With this came, “*suddenly*,” as Malachi had predicted, the swelling music of the great choir of angels singing. Here for the first time were heard the songs of heaven in the language of men. And thus came Jesus himself, fitting, in time and place and circumstance, into the scriptural forecast. If these things be true how can any one doubt that here indeed was the Prince of Heaven, come not by accident but after long preparation; not as a surprise, but pursuant to a definite promise; not in humility—except in his temporary earthly relations—but in majesty; not camping in a military tent, with his armor hung at the entrance, as an earthly chieftain, but as the Prince of Peace, with a shining star above his portal. What more, or more becoming, could have been done to announce him or to welcome him if this was indeed God?

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. The entourage of the Prince of Heaven was magnificent,—far more impressive and convincing, if we think of it carefully, than the great displays of men.

2. The burst of music came "suddenly," as Luke says, thus tieing it up to Malachi's prophecy,—"The Lord whom ye seek shall come 'suddenly.'"
3. Byron sang of the magnificence of the Assyrian army—"The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold, and his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold"; but with it came blood and destruction.
4. A great artist painted a glowing picture of Belshazzar and his splendid court at their feast, and few pictures have been more thrilling; but that feast was a challenge to the God of Hosts, and it is written,—"In that night was Belshazzar slain."
5. Macaulay describes in picturesque language the superb assembly which gathered in Westminster Hall, in their rich robes, and with rare display, at the trial of Warren Hastings; but it had a pitiful outcome, for his acquittal was won on a trifling vote, and Hastings himself, though greatly honored by one party, was greatly detested by another.
6. But when the heavens opened, at the coming of Jesus, the "multitude of the heavenly host" swept through the sky, and "the glory of the Lord," a glory with which no human display can compare, surrounded them. What magnificence that glory was. The richest music of heaven was sung at the head of the great procession, and the message from God which they handed down to man was a program of peace and good will for a world which had known little but hate and carnage.
7. Three things which give to mankind their greatest joy and uplift were combined that night; there were melody, poetry and religion.
8. The spirit of the church has always been buoyed up with these three. The hymns of christians contain them all, and none can be spared.
9. Each of these three has at its heart the essence of harmless joy to the individual, the spirit of mutual regard and helpfulness, and the thankful recognition of God's mercies.
10. What more or different can humanity, at its best, or struggling toward its best, devise?

LESSON LVII

THE EASTER SEASON

Read from John 20:1-10

BACKGROUND:

IT is not important for our purposes to consider how to determine the date for Easter, or the reason for it. The computation is highly artificial, and there is no injunction on the subject in scripture. It seems to have been observed originally on the anniversary of the Jewish passover; but it was changed, since Easter was not a memorial of the event of the passover but of the resurrection. The latter occurred on the day now celebrated as Sunday, while the passover did not; and so the passover date, while being a proper memorial of Christ's *crucifixion*, did not bear any historical relation to his *rising* from the dead.

Lent, which is a forty day fast before Easter, has also no scriptural basis. It has not always been observed at the same time, or for the same period. It has been by many deemed both appropriate and helpful, and for that reason has been adopted by many protestants, though these are not governed by those ecclesiastical rules for its observance which, to the catholic and episcopal churches, have in long centuries of observance come to signify much, and eventually to characterize the time and its observance as sacred.

Whether Easter is, as some say,—so far at least as its date or origin is concerned,—a converted pagan festival, need not concern us much. If converted it is soundly converted. For us there is nothing even

remotely pagan about it. In a bible class it need, as an institution, neither be praised nor defended, and a bible class teacher need not spend much time explaining its significance. Its very name has acquired a general christian character, and connotes itself now not only with the event of the Lord's resurrection but also with the individual assurance of the perpetuity of those elements of humanity which are capable of eternal life. Not only does man now say, with confidence, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," but also,—"In my flesh shall I see God." Perhaps nothing in the experience of humanity is as pathetic as the persistency with which men devote their high qualities to the things which concern only the body, which they know quite well they will find unsatisfying. Whatever can aid in lifting humanity up into its higher realm, even if only for a little while, is well worth observing and maintaining, and all the more if it can teach men to enjoy that experience, and to desire it to continue, and can also remind the race of the better things within its reach, for this world as well as for the next. It is analogous,—is it not,—to the experience of the three disciples on the mount of transfiguration, who wished to build tabernacles, and to remain in that place and condition.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. In these busy times men's attention is apt to be concentrated on the things of the world. Business and pleasure chiefly fill the mind and occupy the time. Something is needed to turn this condition upside down, and furnish an alternative, at least for a little.
2. The Easter anniversary being of such a solemn nature, it is, outwardly at least, respected by the better element in any community, whether religious in sentiment or not.

3. The best service of the season of Lent, merging into the Easter anniversary, is to fix general attention on the needs of the higher life. The ordinary current of life is materialistic and worldly.
4. The picture in Pilgrim's Progress of the man toiling intently with the muckrake, while above him an angel holds out for his acceptance a golden crown, is both realistic and pathetic.
5. As we look forward to the approach of Easter we find it easier to lift our eyes from the busy concerns of the world, and fix our thoughts for a time on higher themes.
6. The things of the body should not, even in the midst of the business of living, be permitted to obscure the things of the soul. They belong in company, and neither is adapted to stand alone.
7. Men have two natures. This is not mystical nor sentimental, but the realest and most certain thing we know.
8. The body, considered alone, is wonderful, but its capacity and its scope are both limited. The maximum of its endurance is not great, and it is subject to be ended without notice.
9. The actual usable period of life is short, even compared with the total life term. The first third is spent in preparation. In the last third we have to endure the gradual failing of bodily power. Only about one-third is left for productive work.
10. But the body, even while it lasts, has only a limited reach. Its contacts with the world are through but five windows, which we term senses.
11. But the life of the soul can be a constant increase and development of those rich faculties of human experience which we, for convenience, call the spirit.
12. It is the commonest experience that the sources of highest human enjoyment are in its sensibilities, and these are outside the body.
13. I wonder if you agree with me that the finest and most satisfying of human faculties are memory and imagination.
14. Who but God could have invented memory? It recalls perfectly the events and experiences of the past. We see them in their color and life, and no lapse of time can fade them.

15. Imagination pictures for us the things still awaiting us, and remoteness in time or space does not affect it.
16. Thus the finest things of life are not seen with the eyes, nor heard with the ears, nor are they grasped by the senses.
17. The finest musical compositions, for instance, sung themselves in the sensitive soul of the composer before a note was struck; and the most beautiful pictures were seen in their completeness by the artist before his brush touched the canvas.
18. Love, joy, peace, friendship, were called by the apostle "fruits of the spirit," though the bodily senses knew none of them.
19. These are the things which make life most worth living, and they may grow and increase to the very end.
20. These are the gift of God, and were conferred on humanity when God said—"Let us make man in our image"; and "He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul."
21. Strange to say these not only make man most worth while to *himself*, but also most acceptable to others. A wooden man, or a wholly worldly one, or a wholly realistic man, soon exhausts his welcome anywhere.
22. So man, as a social being, is best fitted to live among other men by the very faculties which make him most worth while to himself.
23. These then are the faculties most fit to survive; and it is these which God has made immortal.
24. Easter, then, and the period influenced by it, is especially a time when life is lifted to a higher plane; when we not only look forward with hope to perpetual life, with the handicaps of the body removed, and all these higher sensibilities continued at their best, but when we dwell also in the greatest peace and good will among our fellow men.
25. The Easter time is our period of sojourn on the Delectable Hills, from which, like Christian, we are able to see, through the telescope of hope, the gleaming towers and minarets of the Holy City.
26. So let us, while at the Easter season we are on the mountain top, enjoy to the full these good things of the higher life, but also prepare ourselves to go down again tomorrow, and do with greater zest the common duties of the world we live in.

LESSON LXVIII

THANKSGIVING

Read Colossians 1:9-23

BACKGROUND:

A FEW names are arbitrary and nothing else, but most names,—of things, of persons, of events, of occasions,—had originally a real significance, though many have long since lost it, and mean nothing now but identification. This rarely happens to names which recur but seldom, with a definite application. New Year's, Easter, Decoration Day, Independence Day, and Thanksgiving still suggest their origin and application. The last named has a special significance in its origin, which is familiar, and also in its seasonableness, recurring *at the end* of harvest, when the gifts of God are no longer in the future, but past, and in our possession.

It also suggests in its very form gifts, from a source having gifts to bestow; also that they are free,—i.e., they have not been and cannot be paid for; also that the one benefited is a recipient, who can compensate the giver only by thanks. Otherwise they would be in the relation of buyer and seller,—where equivalents have passed, and there remains no obligation. One may thank his grocer, out of mere politeness, but having paid for his turkey the thanks are superficial and formal. But a day set apart,—an occasion specially named for thanks, is of much deeper meaning. Thanks for the harvest, the daily flow of health, the kindness of friends, the provision for current needs,—are full of significance. These have all been bestowed. The recipient can prepare

himself; he can dig his irrigation ditches; he can plow his fields; he can sow his seed; he can get ready to care for his harvest; but he can do nothing else,—absolutely nothing else except wait. The rains; the living germ in the seed; the fruitage; the nourishment in the grain; the bodily life it builds up; the strength it confers; the joy of living; these are the gift of God; and God cannot be compensated. The silver and the gold are already his, and the cattle on a thousand hills. What then can a man do or give in return for such gifts, except thanks. And one who can take such gifts without thanks is known by his fellows as an “*ingrate*,” a name in which is embedded the character of an unworthy and undeserving person; and once a year his neighbors combine to tell him so. Does he,—can he,—continue to appropriate and utilize such gifts without acknowledgment? Could you? Some people are *shamed* into thanksgiving, to God or their fellow men. Benjamin Franklin wrote that such was the case on the first American Thanksgiving Day. That celebration did not evolve out of a thankful spirit. The meeting was called, he said, as a day of fasting and prayer. The people were discontented, and would have complained to God. But a farmer present said that it ought to be made a time of thanksgiving instead. They had not received all they hoped for, but they had enough, and they had also the religious liberty they had sought. Their hearts were changed, and their feelings reversed, and that day began our long series of annual thanksgivings, on which we find much to be grateful for, even though there be affliction also.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. Minds differ, or rather habits of mind differ. Some dwell most on the things denied them, and acquire the habit of grieving. Others count and recount their blessings.

2. So some spend their reflections upon their *rights*, while others think most of their *privileges* and opportunities.
3. None of us has any trouble in deciding which of these spirits is the more enviable; and every one is aware that in any life there will be found an abundance of reasons for both.
4. Fast days, if founded on personal or material grievances, evidence a belief that we have a right to *demand* of God, instead of *beseeching* him.
5. A prayer of that kind, or a day of such prayers, has in it no spirit of *submission* to the wiser judgment of God, but amounts to an assertion of a right to *choose for ourselves*.
6. Jesus prayed that God would remove the terrible cup presented to him, but said—"not as I will, but as thou wilt."
7. He also said, in one of his prayers, "I know that thou hearest me always." Anything less than that is an assertion of greater wisdom than God.
8. Ultimately what we all want is *peace*. This God has power to give, and this he has promised. But often we think we know how to get it, and present our demands specifically for the kind of blessings by which we think it will be procured.
9. Sometimes we want money; sometimes health; sometimes recognition; but each of these, if we get it, would at most be only a *step on the way to peace*.
10. But if we reflect reasonably we know people who have one or all of these, and yet lack peace.
11. The best and surest road to peace is by a thankful heart, that takes God's gifts with joy. Such is the teaching of scripture, and such also is experience.
12. A soul which, while knowing its desires, knows also God's greater wisdom, and has confidence also in his goodness and patience, gets the most out of life, and finds the greatest occasion for thanksgiving.
13. An outstanding lesson on this subject it seems to me, is the difference between the emotion of thankfulness for *things*, which is casual and often temporary, and the cultivation of a *thankful spirit*, which sees God through his gifts, and continually keeps the heart at peace.
14. Here is a great difference, for God does not change; and the man who can keep his face toward this conviction, finds himself always filled with trust, and by that also with a profound measure of contentment.

The New Testament

GROUP G

INCIDENTS in the progress of the early church; comprising certain evidences of the play of humanity in the development of the spiritual kingdom.

LESSON

LXIX. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EARLY CHURCH

LXX. PETER GOES FISHING

LXXI. PAUL'S QUICK REVERSAL

LXXII. PAUL'S TRIP TO EUROPE

LXXIII. THE FAREWELL TO PAUL AT MILETUS

LXXIV. THE SEER AND THE SEA

LESSON LXIX

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EARLY CHURCH

Read Acts 6:1-8

BACKGROUND:

THE acts of the apostles transcribed in the book of that name were themselves essentially the early history of the church. That book can hardly be called the lives of the apostles, but it comprises at least their most active lives. The facts it narrates could not well be understood without the biographies of Jesus which precede them. Nor could the full bearing of those biographies be grasped without the story of their effect, when applied. However clearly the words and deeds of Jesus might be apprehended as mere narratives, they looked to the future for their effect on that group of devoted beings who sincerely accepted them, and who staked life itself on the issue. The tale of their later lives alone can tell how the life and words of the Master made over the human spirit, without crushing out, or even distorting, the personal characteristics of each individual, or each race. Did you suppose the gospel, when fully applied, would make men alike? Well then observe James and Peter; Barnabas and Paul; Dorcas and Lydia. Simple are the phrases, but profound is the meaning and elevating the quality of the teaching of Jesus. It perfectly fits the needs of man's better nature, in respect of which all humanity, wherever found, is essentially alike. This is not necessarily true of its physical habits or mode of life. It is quite possible to distinguish between the *needs* of men and their *tastes*,

preferences, attachments, etc., in respect to which we all differ. The latter grow on the outside. They may be likened to what Paul calls the "fruit of the spirit"; the "*fruits of righteousness*"; what Peter calls the "*ornament* of a meek and quiet spirit." Here in the early church we find the widest difference in personality with the same underlying spirit of grace. When all hearts were centered on the newly risen Lord, and all eyes were turned heavenward to follow him when he rose, it was quite possible to live in such a spirit of tolerance and affection that those about them said—"behold how these christians love one another." Individuals differed then, as they differ now, in all those traits of personality which are the result of temperament and habit; and yet these very differences, and the diverse faculties and powers which accompanied them, were made tributary,—even as their goods were,—to the common cause. Such we suppose is the life in heaven, and such, for a little while, was the condition of the citizenship on earth.

If so then why not now? It is not to be supposed, the writer thinks, that even then there were no groups who found themselves especially congenial, or who enjoyed most those persons of similar tastes. Even Jesus had his group of three who were with him, by his own choice, in his deeper experiences; and one who, above the rest, was known as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." If distinctions like these were the basis of the groupings we call "denominations" there would be no occasion, and no gain, for artificially combining them in solidarity. The main thing we learn from the early church is the need and working advantage of the conscious assurance of a common master, to whom all hearts turn, and on whom all hopes are fastened.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. That diverse personalities are God-given, and quite within his plans for humanity, is plain from the differences apparent among children of the same parents, trained alike, and growing up in each other's company.
2. Another instructive fact we may learn from such a family,—viz., that under such auspices grows at its best the habit of concession, of tolerance, of kindly courtesy.
3. We also learn, however, that these do not grow or develop without a constant struggle. Self-assertion, self-indulgence, self-serving, are the constant enemies of peace even there, and brotherly and sisterly affections, however sincere, are not able to expel them.
4. Of some such analogy is the christian church,—even at its best. If, as some think, there is no personal Satan, to tempt and try even those who sincerely love each other, the atmosphere of disputation and conflict which has always been clearly visible is hard to explain.
5. In the plan of God for the development of high character among men there is no quality more admirable than self-restraint, self-forgetfulness, emulation in helpfulness; but it grows and flourishes best where it is tried the most.
6. A distinguished moderator of the Presbyterian church said,—quite truly,—that there is nothing harder in life than to love a person we can't like. But this is one of the most satisfying of all the "fruits of righteousness."
7. If there were no grindstone there would be no sharp edge. If there were no heat and no contrasting cold there would be no fine temper in the steel.
8. Stephen seems to have been a most gentle and gracious christian. Paul was fierce and fiery. He stood by and held the garments of those who stoned Stephen. But it was probably largely Stephen's piety which softened at last Paul's hard heart.
9. Paul himself said, of his conviction and conversion, that he answered God in his vision, "Lord, thou knowest that when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him."

10. Few things in the life of Paul seem to me so pathetic as that. And when Paul and Stephen met again in the house of the blessed I imagine Paul as gentle and gracious as Stephen himself.
11. We are all therefore men of earthly passions, and fierce sometimes in imposing our demands on others, and still we are aware that strength grows out of struggle and endeavor, and we thank God that all our best traits do not come easy.
12. So the fellowship of men of different types, even when of the same race, are expected to live together and work together, and even out of the steel and the spark to draw a lesson of mutual respect and affection, and at last to sit down together,—peaceful and brotherly,—in the kingdom of heaven.

LESSON LXX

PETER GOES FISHING

Read from John 25

BACKGROUND:

“**I** go a fishing,” said Peter, and the others said, “We also go with thee.” This was not a proposal for a recreation trip, but a return to the commonplace occupation of making a living, for this was their business. It was, however, close to the surrender of a profound hope, which on the death and burial of their beloved Master seemed to them forever at an end. “We trusted that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel,” said the two disciples to the stranger, as they walked to Emmaus. What a blow! In spite of what we now see to have been his repeated assertions, they had not expected him to die. Vaguely but confidently they had expected him somehow to remove the Roman yoke, and restore the nation of Israel to a state of independence, if not supremacy. They accepted him as the predicted messiah, but their prejudgetment of his function was that of their nation as a whole, and was largely a worldly one. It seems probable that not even the closest three of his disciples apprehended the spiritual nature of his kingdom until after his resurrection and his frequent appearances. So at his death Peter and his fisher friends ran up the signal of surrender, and went back fishing. In spite of arguments, prejudgetments are generally controlling. That was, in effect, what Jesus meant when he said to the pharisees that except they repented, (turned in the other direction), and became as little

children,—(open-minded,—receptive),—they could not even *see* the kingdom of God.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. The bread and butter occupations of life are the most constantly recurring ones, and with these and their materialistic relations we must always deal.
2. The spiritual aspects of life have always somewhat the character of dreams, and while they are the most convincing and satisfying of human experiences, they are also in their nature the most evanescent.
3. They are not tested by the bodily senses, and the temptation is always present to act and to judge by those criterions which especially concern the body and its demands.
4. But in our reflective moments, the things we call spiritual—love, aspiration, hope, appreciation of the beautiful, and others not temporal or temporary,—dominate, and will not consent to be forgotten.
5. So the minds of the disciples, though back at their old occupation, dwelt strongly on their Master and his sayings, and when he appeared to them on the shore, as they fished, went to him gladly.
6. Perhaps economic pressure took them back to their old tasks. The death of the Master and the treason and suicide of their treasurer, Judas, may have checked the flow of gifts on which they had been subsisting.
7. Jesus himself did not resent their return to business, but he corrected their error when he appeared to them on the shore, and then he recalled them to the higher life to which they had originally devoted themselves.
8. Then, on his ascension, descended the Spirit, according to promise, and removed their perplexities, clarified their apprehensions, and set them fairly on a straight road.
9. They became in fact “fishers of men,” clear, confident and courageous, and they “turned the world upside down.”

LESSON LXXI

PAUL'S QUICK REVERSAL

Read Acts 9:1-20

BACKGROUND:

PAUL was both earnest and honest. He also had an acute mind, and he had trained it under one of the ablest teachers of his time. But he was wrong. Although his father's home was in the far off city of Tarsus he had himself lived for a substantial period in Jerusalem. He knew much about Jesus, but he was convinced that he was not the true messiah. What he knew about those who, after Jesus was crucified, comprised his group of followers, probably convinced him that they were sincere, but left him still confident that they were wrong. Their course, if it were widely followed, would overpower and overturn Judaism, and this he regarded as not merely treason but blasphemy. He believed they must be put down by force, and as an ardent patriot, and devoted, heart and soul, to the Jewish religion, he offered himself as an instrumentality to wipe out, root and branch, what he called "the way." He was wrong, in spite of his wisdom, but he was to receive more convincing reasons for a different assurance. On the day that the brilliant light which fell on him near Damascus struck him blind a marvelous change occurred. All at once he saw with his blind eyes what he had been wholly unable to see with his vision unimpaired,—that Jesus was in fact the promised messiah; and there rushed upon his mind the many prophecies which pointed to and confirmed it. He knew

then,—he *knew*,—that it was so. All the acute reasoning which had so long led him in one direction now led him in another, and his future path began to grow clear, “and straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues that he was the son of God”; and “confounded the Jews, proving that this is the very Christ.”

The truth is often long resisted even by acute minds, as it was in the days of Galileo, and in the days of Luther; but when it once dawns how clear it is. How clearly and sharply it seems to fit into and around the arguments and conditions we once deemed inconsistent. How suddenly and completely the fresh light shines. It was so in Paul’s case. Ananias prayed for him, “that he might be filled with the Holy Ghost,” and the descent of the Spirit was as sudden and as convincing as when it fell on the disciples in the upper room.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. What an example this was of the errors which may befall the human judgment.
2. Sometimes it happens because we have the *facts* wrong; but here the facts were clear, and the conclusions ought to have been inevitable from the first.
3. It was prejudgment,—what we call prejudice,—which dulled Paul’s vision. It was an illustration of what Jesus had Himself said to the pharisees,—“Except ye repent, and become as little children, ye cannot *see* the Kingdom of God.”
4. An open mind is the first requirement to an apprehension of new truth.
5. The Jews had always been taught, and fully expected, that a temporal kingdom would arise when Christ should come, like that of Solomon.
6. Jesus was born humbly,—as they thought,—not as became a royal prince of a proud race. They did not know of the train of angels and the celestial choir that accompanied him when he came.

7. They did not know that he was born in Bethlehem, as was prophesied in the scriptures. They said, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"
8. They did not realize that for mankind the satisfactions of the spirit are better worth while than those of the world and the flesh, and therefore could not conceive that the messianic kingdom might be spiritual and not earthly.
9. They did not realize that all humanity had been made in God's image, and had equal claims on his mercy, regardless of race.
10. When the facts were fully known, and clearly apprehended, the circumstances of his birth and life and death and resurrection all conformed to the prophecies,—"but their eyes were holden."
11. When these things were borne in on Paul's mind he believed, and like Thomas he said,—"My Lord and my God."
12. This new conviction might well be sudden and still complete, ever afterward shining with new and increasing light.
13. So Paul found that, using the same facts and the same prophecies, he could and *must* turn directly about and confound those who had learned even from him these erroneous views he now opposed.
14. Paul's former friends and supporters in Damascus, who had awaited his coming in the role of punisher and persecutor, turned on him when he turned from his errors, and would have destroyed him also but for the watchfulness of his christian friends, who let him down over the wall in a basket.
15. It was with infinite sadness that Paul, who loved his own race, realized the utter hardness of their hearts, and the determination with which they closed their eyes to this new truth.
16. What, in view of his new light, now seemed to him so clear, they still refused to accept. He "mightily convinced" them, so that they could find no answer, but they illustrated again the soundness of the truth that "with the heart" (and not the mind), man believeth unto repentance. It is sadly true yet.

LESSON LXXII

PAUL'S TRIP TO EUROPE

Read from Acts 16:7-15

BACKGROUND:

THE merely casual or pleasure trip is of course out of the present question. Paul's trip was for a well-defined purpose, and was far more vital than even Paul knew. It was his function, though he did not know it, to "turn the world upside down." Across the sea was a virile race capable of accomplishing more than any other,—as its history shows—if only its heart and will could be strongly moved—to extend the christian faith, —to magnify it, to glorify it, to undergo martyrdom for it. Paul sought to go into Syria, "but the spirit suffered him not." Then came his vision of the European from Macedonia inviting him there. We dare not even speculate on what would have befallen our own race if he had refused to go, but we have an analogy in Africa, the home of the "blameless Ethiopians,"—even in Homeric times the "friends of God." Why did that land for so many centuries remain "the dark continent"? Authentic history gives no answer, but may we not wonder whether some wilful servant of God had a similar invitation out of its populous forests, but failed to respond. God has many times communicated his will by the meaning he gives the dashing waves of the sea. John at Patmos heard the voice of God, by the sea beach, "like the sound of many waters." Paul, sleeping on the roof of a house in Troas, heard the message from Macedonia in the thunder and splash of the sea

not far away. The Greek language, as we may learn from Homer, was "onomato-poetic" and the voice of the sea,—"*poluphloisboio thalasses,*"—spoke to Paul's ears in his favorite tongue. But for that vision and his prompt response,—assuredly gathering that the Lord had called him,—perhaps Europe might have lain as long in darkness as Africa did.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. A world crisis may turn on an event in itself as trifling as a trip to Europe.
2. It depends upon the nature of the errand, and the fitness and earnestness of the traveller.
3. Alexander's conquering journey changed the face of the world, not only in a military but in a spiritual sense.
4. God was then bringing about "the fulness of time" when the messiah should be due. He needed the wide distribution of a fit and fluent language, and such was the Greek, and such was the result, though Alexander died without conquering the world.
5. There was a like critical stage when Julius Caesar lingered on the banks of the Rubicon:—"he plunged, he crossed, and Rome was free no more."
6. The preparation for the coming of Christ required a general world power, and the spread of a single system of laws and their administration; and this was furnished by the ambition of the Roman emperors.
7. If the christian message had been restricted in its appeal, or fitted for the needs of a few only, all these preparations would have had slight effect.
8. Or if, in spite of an ample message and an ample equipment, there had been no willing messenger, the plans of Europe might have been long delayed, or diverted.
9. "How shall they hear without a preacher?" said Paul himself. Many a missionary since Paul has inspired his soul and urged his reluctant courage with that language,—and with Paul's own example.
10. The occasion may look small, but its results may be very great. "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth."

LESSON LXXIII

THE FAREWELL TO PAUL AT MILETUS

Read Acts 20:13-38

BACKGROUND:

PAUL, on his hurried journey back to Jerusalem, was unable to visit Ephesus, and invited the heads of the various christian churches there to meet him at Miletus, which was the seaport town of Ephesus, some thirty-six miles away. The distance had to be traversed on foot; but apparently all came. The details of the pathetic scene, as they separated from him with tears, "sorrowing most of all that they should see his face no more," are not within our theme, but they furnish a background for our lesson which helps us to apprehend it. A few plain inferences are these:—They and their parishioners were chiefly gentiles, for after three months' effort Paul had become convinced that the Jews were not receptive, and had turned to the gentiles. His converts were evidently numerous, comprising a considerable number of churches. Paul's influence with them had been immense, and their attachment to him conforming. They were open-minded and susceptible, and received his gospel appeals with eagerness, whereas the minds of the Jews were filled with adverse pre-judgments, and though their religion was the same as his half the way they refused his testimony to the rest. Such has been the experience of the christian church ever since. The Jews, in the mass, even to the present day, remain unconvinced; and so the progress of the gospel, great as it is, has been among

those of other races and different pre-conceptions. Ephesus was a cosmopolitan city, and there were converts there of many alien races. They loved and trusted Paul, and some of them would perhaps have worshipped him as more than man if he had not steadily averred his merely human standing. He said, writing to the Corinthians,—“Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed.” And here they were about to separate,—never more to meet,—and they wept, but went back, still adhering to their faith, and hoping to meet him again in paradise, as he had taught. Does not the story of this farewell set forth one of the compensations of the ministry,—especially comforting to missionaries and to those ministers whose lot it has been to give to the sad and the lonely and the lowly their principal consolation,—the “garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.” A large part of Paul’s reward in glory must be the multitude of friends he comforted when he himself had only God to comfort him.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. Many, even of the Jews who rejected Paul and his message, must have turned away in sadness when he left them at Ephesus and went to the gentiles, for at most they must have had many doubts.
2. Many of them must have been often heavy hearted and sad,—for such is the lot of mortals,—and Paul’s message had in it elements of comfort and peace which they could not find in their own chilly belief.
3. Probably there were many among those convinced presbyters who loved him and his messages while he was in Ephesus who trudged on foot all the weary way to Miletus to bid him a weeping farewell.
4. Many there were in the christian brotherhood, not in Ephesus only but wherever believers were found, who also loved Paul for

his faith and zeal, and who like him were of Hebrew race, who had lost none of their fervor as Israelites when they came to accept Jesus as the true messiah;—there was James, the Lord's brother, prominent in the church at Jerusalem, and doubtless many of the one hundred and twenty who met in the upper room.

5. And yet the synagogues generally received him coldly, and he—though a Jew himself—was driven to exclaim,—“I turn to the gentiles.” The sadness of Paul over the rejection of Jesus by the Jews can be best apprehended when, like Moses, he offered to lose even his own soul if thereby he could save the people of his race.
6. Probably every presbyter at Miletus went back to his work with more warmth about his heart, for Paul’s appreciation and his bravery and confidence in God would kindle in them also a new confidence; and a spirit of emulation would hasten their pace homeward, and their impulse to do better than ever.
7. One of the heavy drags which clog the footsteps of church workers, especially in remote places, or among worldly people, is the feeling that they work alone, or lack sympathy.
8. Therefore the greetings of courageous men working loyally and cheerfully under like conditions are an effective stimulus, even though there be partings as well as meetings, or though they be rare.
9. The constriction about the heart as one waves good-bye is not all sad, and not all a hindrance to useful work. On the contrary, it adds frequently one more experience from which the worker gathers help to comfort those others who, when sad partings occur, have not yet acquired the hopeful assurance of another meeting, in a place and under conditions of permanent bliss.

LESSON LXXIV

THE SEER AND THE SEA

Read from Revelation.

BACKGROUND:

THE aspect of the sea and sky to one set against his will on a barren island, is the one brought before us by the vision of Revelation. The chief characteristic of the sea is not only its immensity,—stretching away to the horizon on every side,—but its loneliness. Such was its strongest impression on Napoleon on his sad island home at St. Helena. One of the most moving pieces of sculpture I ever saw is the seated figure of Napoleon, in his exile, with maps of France on his knee, but with his reflective gaze turned toward the homeland. It stood lately,—and perhaps remains now,—in the palace of Versailles. Sad memories and blasted hopes are depicted on his countenance, but his eyes are upon the sea,—the separating sea. Such was the evident aspect of it to John. He watched its wide reaches by day and listened to its continual roar and splash by night. To him it was a barrier which he could not cross, and in his dreams of the future home of the blest one of its marked features was that there would be no more sea,—no devastating sea; no separating sea; and yet his vision is filled with impressions which he could only get from the sky and sea. Perhaps it was from the “cloud-built palaces” he saw from the shore of Patmos that he got the suggestion of the new Jerusalem. Perhaps the colored clouds of sunset may have been the source of his picture of its pearly gates and

glowing walls. Perhaps its vivid gleams in storm or sunset may have suggested the rainbow he saw about the throne of the God of Heaven, or furnished the coloring for his description of the "other mighty angel" clothed with a cloud, and with a rainbow upon his head. Certainly the songs he heard and the voices which were borne to his ears or made clear to his consciousness came out of the roaring and dashing of the waves upon the beach. Again and again he says,—in equivalent terms,—“I heard the voice of a great multitude, as the voice of many waters.” Such also was probably the case of the Macedonian call to Paul, as he slept on the roof at Troas, by the shore of the sea. It was not imagination, but the very voice of God, but to Paul, both the figure of the man and the voice of his plea was gathered out of the splash of the waves. If God’s communications to his servants are not limited to human language they may be made by direct impressions on the mind instead of vocal sounds by the medium of the ear. Such may have been the method on the day of Pentecost, or at the baptism of Christ, when some said it thundered. Surely God can convey his meaning by other methods than oral speech. Even in the world there are many communications not verbal. It is said quite beautifully that “a smile and a tear are the same in all languages.” No one knows what is meant by telepathy or mesmerism. Yet we hear much of the transfer of thought, which many deem real enough. The bible promises the communication by saints in heaven notwithstanding their inability to apprehend each other here. The Greek language, as used in Homer, is full of “onomatopoetica,” which is the communication of ideas by the reproduction of sounds. It espe-

cially belongs to words imitating the sound of the sea, or the splashing of the waves. So it is depicted in the Iliad of Homer, where the priest walks along the shore, and his tread mingles with the sound of the waters. It is therefore no mere dream to suppose that John, who was very familiar with Greek, did not fail to catch what Homer knew so well. That John so visualized what he saw, and apprehended what he heard, is a dream of mine which I could hardly verify, but I think it both beautiful and probable.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. The seer, or prophet, or messenger, by whatever name called, got his word from God by divers ways,—as in the cases of Samuel, of Isaiah, of Ezekiel, and of John and Paul.
2. If God can communicate with man at all he can certainly choose his own means.
3. It is common experience that remote causes,—like the sound of a familiar song, the recollection of a familiar poem or hymn, the recurrence of a long forgotten odor, or other like incidents may suggest or recall a train of thought. The word “reading” is by derivation “talking” on paper. Ordinary speech, calling for vocal and auditory equipment and the use of a common language, is not the only mode of communicating ideas.
4. Is this a mere accident, or is the subconscious mind a normal part of the human organization,—a gift of God?
5. If we are convinced that God was, when man was created, and still is, we should find no difficulty in seeing in such events a designed communication, as explicit and implicit as if shouted from the skies.
6. The fact that some do not catch it, or that they regard it as a mere accident, is not new. The incidents mentioned above are like many others, and all indicate that the mind is the chief factor in the transfer of thought, and as God made both he can use both.
7. This was signified when Abraham (in the parable) said to Dives, when he asked for a distinct message to his brethren, that they

already had Moses and the prophets, and if they rejected their message they would not be convinced though one came to them from the dead.

8. It is therefore not too fanciful for us to picture the venerable John listening by the shore of Patmos while the waves spoke to him, and watching the changing clouds of the sky paint for him pictures of the things yet to be done in the plans of God.
9. Such was the apprehension of Paul when he saw himself surrounded by a "cloud of witnesses." Such was the experience of Elisha, when at his prayer there was revealed to his servant the "mountain full of horses and chariots."
10. Visions are the gift of God, making real to men things otherwise hard to understand. Instances are the revelation to the three apostles of the figures (theretofore unknown) of Moses and Elias on the mount of transfiguration; Stephen's vision of Jesus, leaning toward him over the parapets of heaven; and Paul's vision on the road to Damascus. Such also is Paul's picture of the ranks of glory and authority prevailing in heaven.

The New Testament

GROUP H

THE indirect teachings of Jesus, as applied to the life of men, especially in their relations with one another.

LESSON

LXXV. SIMPLICITY AS A MODE OF LIFE

LXXVI. COMPARISONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

LXXVII. HABITS, AND THEIR USES

LXXVIII. CHOICES, AND HOW TO MAKE THEM

LXXIX. THE COMPLETE MAN

LXXX. OVERTONES

LXXXI. THE DIVINE GIFT OF MUSIC

LXXXII. THE MUSIC OF PARADISE

LXXXIII. THE GLORY OF GOD

LXXXIV. TIME—HOW MUCH, AND HOW USED

LXXXV. AMEN AND AMEN

LXXXVI. TESTIMONIALS OF EMINENT MEN TO RELIGION

LESSON LXXV

SIMPLICITY AS A MODE OF LIFE

Read Luke 7:24-35

BACKGROUND:

A STRAIGHT line is the shortest distance between two points. This is a fundamental axiom of geometry. Water, at rest, in however many connecting vessels, will always stand at the same level. This is a fundamental rule of physics. Abstract truth is a fundamental of morals. These theorems and many others are analogous to our subject. Jesus mentioned many such; one is "Let your communication be Yea, yea, and Nay, nay." The straight line in conduct; the simple truth in speech; a known level of spiritual life, equal to the height at which man was made—"in the image of God"; these make for humanity a basis of living in all these spheres,—a spiritual aspiration, a code of morals and manners, and a defined line of action; all of which are straightforward, simple, and on an ascending plane. What could a man desire, for himself or for the world, more or better?

Such is Jesus' teaching. It is axiomatic. It requires no proof, but admits of illustration. It must have commended itself at once, not requiring time for reflection, to every hearer.

Yet how far we poor mortals fall below that code. It is re-stated in the "golden rule"; illustrated in the parable of the Good Samaritan; and exhibited all through the life, as well as the teachings, of the Saviour. We have a word, "involved," which describes the con-

verse. It suggests the sculpture of Laocoön. It is the twisting of the snake, the winding of the liar, and a common practice of evasion, which we all despise, though sometimes we are tempted to practice it.

The word "simple" in Latin is "without a fold,"—or doubling. It is now often used to mean the absence of pretense, in life or conduct. It is sometimes understood as meaning without display; or without habits of luxury. And yet we are all aware that riches and simplicity need not be hostile. The Cheeryble Brothers in fiction, Abraham in the bible, and many a man now whom we could name here, but ought not, are illustrations. An enormously wealthy woman recently died in New York, leaving immense sums to her church and its Christlike causes; but the newspapers reported that her personal effects were valued at about seven hundred dollars. Human beings are but poor illustrations of Jesus' rule of life, because we are all conscious of lamentable failures, but the God-approved rule of conduct,—how it shines and glows and ascends;—its base is on the earth, but its ultimate rounds are in the glory of the perfect day.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. Simplicity has several relations,—to thought, to speech and to life. We think of it chiefly as pertaining to life,—and speak of "the simple life," as if life alone is concerned.
2. But life, standing alone, cannot be simple. Life is not an act, nor even a series of acts, but a continuity,—one act linking with another, until the heart comes to rest.
3. It is a continued story, having a beginning, middle and end; and preceding, or at least controlling life is a habit, or series of habits; and behind these are thoughts and motives,—neglected or controlled.

4. It is a plant,—a growth,—and has a root and a sap. Figs cannot grow from thistles, nor can an evil tree bear good fruit. The beginning therefore is fundamental.
5. A simple heart;—what is it, and how can it be distinguished, and how can a start be made?
6. The order of succession would seem to be,—(1) An adequate soil—which is a submissive will,—willing to produce the graces of the spirit; (2) a *controlled* will,—which, having chosen its direction by all the light God has furnished,—keeps right on, without deviation; (3) a loving and kindly will, which will take account of the needs of others.
7. The simple life is transparent, candid, loyal, persevering, direct. It has a single motive, a single purpose, and a single direction. Probably all will agree that this correctly defines the simple life in its personal aspect.
8. In its visible or economic aspect, which is its course through the world, it is yea, yea, in speech: in behavior seeking and using only enough of the world to ensure a healthy life, physical and spiritual; in action, going straight to the point sought; in aspiration, fixing a definite end, and diverging neither to the right nor to the left.
9. What more, and what less, does the method of Jesus require: such is the prescription of the sermon on the mount.
 - a. One day at a time?
“The morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.”
 - b. Without hypocrisy or pretence:
“Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.”
 - c. An eye on the world to come:
“Where your treasure is there shall your heart be also.”
 - d. A confident faith:
“Behold the fowls of the air . . . are ye not much better than they?”
 - e. A definite object in prayer:
“Use not vain repetition, as the heathen do.”
 - f. Build for endurance:
“That house fell not, for it was founded on a rock.”
 - g. Lay little stress on worldly goods:
“Give to him that asketh thee”;
“If any man take away thy coat let him have thy cloak also.”

LESSON LXXVI

COMPARISONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

*Read Jude 5; Deuteronomy 32:7;
Deuteronomy 8:2-6*

BACKGROUND:

IN MY boyhood our writing lessons were by copy books in series, each a given number of pages. The line to be copied on the first and last pages was, "This is a sample of my handwriting, commencing (completing) Number—." We came later to a method of greater complexity, and now to none at all; but the old way, as applied not merely to writing, but to every kind of mental and spiritual progress, has advantages which ought not to be lost. It is in fact accepted in principle in many applications, though all too often forgotten in practice.

Life is much like a walking journey through a mountainous country. The road winds in and out, and up and down. Sometimes we think we are going fast, and at other times the road winds on itself so much that we doubt whether we are gaining or losing. But for the occasional peaks and high hills we might never know; but on these we pause and look around. We are somewhat interested in looking forward, but much more and oftener in looking back, for there we have familiar scenes and objects to mark our progress. Each hill we have crossed is a point for comparison; and so each winding turn down into the valley, or across a rushing creek; and perhaps also some patch of brambles, or some dark, deep pool we looked into as we passed. Such

is life, and without those sharply distinct features of our journey we should find life very tame, for comparisons are not only the milestones which mark progress, but the condiments which gave taste to experience.

In some of our state constitutions these points of comparison are laid down as an important test of adherence to our theories of government. One uses these words,—“A frequent recurrence to the principles of free government is necessary to maintain the blessings of liberty.” So New Year’s Day is often urged as a suitable date for reviewing and comparing our advances or retrogressions in religious life. Can anyone suggest a plan more likely to be helpful? Is it not true that a wrong tendency in an individual, perfectly visible to others, is often unnoticed by the victim until some event occurs which demands a backward look? Such are the cases where men far on the downward road have been recalled by the casual hearing of an old song, or meeting with a former friend, or some kindness, once familiar, from an unexpected source. It is the review and comparison in such cases which serves as a stimulant to the will. God himself uses it as a check to a downward course. Nothing is more outstanding in the appeals of Moses, speaking God’s message, than the urge to “remember,” and to review, and correct, and begin again.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. It is the teaching of scripture and of experience that if left unintended human tendencies are downwards, and not upwards.
2. We frequently call that force “weight” which draws substances,—liquid or solid,—from a higher to a lower level; but in fact it is the persistent pull of gravitation, which operates not occasionally,—now and then,—but constantly, to keep our feet in contact with the earth; and it never yields nor weakens.

3. It is not a mere analogy which sees a similar downward trend in human nature, except when supported by an equivalent or superior counter pressure.
4. Nor is this a theological formula, devised to explain an assured fact. It is itself a familiar fact, which has a bearing on conduct. We are not here concerned with the theory of explanation, but only with the simple fact, evident both physically and spiritually.
5. Whether the human will, standing alone, is equal to this counteracting task or not, it seems quite certain that, assuming any given moral standard, mere drifting or indifference will always tend away from it.
6. A distinguished person once said,—lamenting the inadequacy of his will,—“I could do anything if I could only will to do it.”
7. Certainly the human will, as distinguished from the human desire, is not automatic, nor self sufficient, but itself requires constraint from without.
8. We christians, deeming the fact of human weakness to be established beyond fair contradiction, can find no countervailing force except in the power and goodness of God.
9. Overcoming inertia, struggling upwards, energizing the will, improvement in any degree, requires constant effort, and behind such effort is either a pulling or a pushing, supplementary to the mere human urge, which is not, even when most earnest, adequate in power, nor uniform in application.
10. The pulling or drawing force, applied by constant external constraint, is most effective. It may be of many kinds,—as, for example, affection for a person; desire of reward; interest in a theme, or eagerness for a result to be attained. Some of these are effective for a time, but rarely adequate in pulling power, or long enough continued.
11. This supplementary urge consists at times of some great and immediate need, which calls for action to avoid calamity. Whatever it may be, it is a constraint, outside the individual will.
12. Fortunately for the progress of humanity, God makes use of both the human will and the divine constraint; and we can, by God's grace, bring ourselves within the sweep of these twin powers.

13. Every phase of human advance or resistance to this downward tendency requires a constant or frequent comparison of present conditions with a recorded or remembered past, and the copy book method has not yet been superseded.

LESSON LXXVII

HABITS, AND THEIR USES

*Read I. Samuel 12:13-15;
Deuteronomy 32:6-12*

BACKGROUND:

Do you remember the white and black spotted dog which used to trot along under the rich man's carriage? He seemed to do it from choice, because he loved his master. No, not so. It was a habit, forced upon him until he learned that it was useless to resist. At first he struggled against it until his neck was sore, and at last it became normal, and he did it cheerfully. Can you look at it or think of it without seeing the lesson in it? Almost all good habits were formed under pressure of some kind. Occasionally they were induced by a hope of reward, and sometimes, though rarely in human beings, undertaken and maintained of deliberate purpose. Evil habits come easier. In many cases we drift into them. The currents of life flow down hill, and only definite and continued resistance will lead humanity the other way. This recognized tendency is formulated in the Presbyterian church into a doctrine known as total depravity. It means more than this, and has a deeper origin, but the fact that it is easier to do wrong than right is plain. The laws of nature form many of our habits for us. If one would not fall over a precipice he must avoid it. He must stand firm under when a tree falls. Liquor will intoxicate; strychnine will poison; and our earnest wishes that it were otherwise will not change it. Many people complain that the laws of

nature compel their faults, and blame God himself for them. A new theory of the training of children is designated as self-expression, and under the theory this is cultivated; but the laws of nature are to the contrary, and God does not create a new course of nature for any individual case. Even a child must, by self control, if not by compulsion, recognize these laws, or suffer the consequences. So it is as true of us as of the coach dog that our habits must conform to our environment, must avoid the evil and cultivate the good, to make life either useful or comfortable. So self-restraint and self-compulsion may be said to be a law of life,—at least of a happy life. Thank God it is still true that the oftener an act is repeated the easier it is. It is for this reason that the daily duties of life do not require a fresh exercise of will, or a struggle to choose, each time, for the course of habit becomes normal and automatic. After it is well set a change requires effort of mind and hand. This is the reason for the urgency of correct education in the first place. We have all heard the wise saying,—“give me the first ten years of a child’s life, and I care not who has the rest.” This is the reason the words or melody of a familiar song, or the reading of a familiar text, or even the floating touch of a familiar perfume, have sufficed to call back in weak mortals the aspirations, and sometimes revive the convictions, and renew the habits, of earlier and better days.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. Most theories of training or behavior are founded on an ideal conception of what human nature ought to be.
2. The bible alone, it seems to me, takes account of frailty, as well as strength, of self-indulgence as well as kindness. It assumes that the errors into which people drift are as much

below the required standard of perfection as the acts of positive wrong which they commit.

3. Habits of positive virtue and helpfulness are not to be acquired without the training of the *will*, which is the essential force behind every laudable act;—i.e., the will to do the affirmative thing which needs to be done;—the will to refrain from the thing which ought not to be done.
4. It is perfectly manifest that behind every good habit is an affirmative *purpose*; and therefore such habits are not accidental. If persevered in they become ultimately more or less automatic, so that the full power of the will need not always be brought into play.
5. A bad habit however is not usually the result of a conscious effort. It grows out of inattention or negligence, and gains in momentum until some explosion or direful event calls attention to it, and the need of recovery. Is not this common observation?
6. Who that has had occasion to reverse such a course has found it easy. We can drift downward, but not upward. The struggle to amend, how bitter and prolonged it is. Here is the field for the will, and if untrained or neglected, it often defies control.
7. A gentleman once said, in great sadness—"I could do anything if I could only will to do it."
8. This is one unfortunate result of the failure to cultivate good habits. "Eternal vigilance," said one, "is the price of liberty." It is equally the price of good behavior.
9. If God could not or would not intervene, and aid to brace up the human will, every community, every family,—indeed every individual, would fall into a state of anarchy, and soon get beyond recovery, through sheer lack of purpose and pressure.
10. And even if the downward trend were rectified its effects would not be cured. A man whose boy had acquired a habit of lying persuaded him, on every such occasion, to drive a nail into a post before the house, and on each successful resistance to draw one out. One day the boy broke in on his father in great delight, and begged him to come and see that every nail had been drawn out. The father commended him for his persistence, but said,—"My boy, look at the scars."

LESSON LXXVIII

CHOICES, AND HOW TO MAKE THEM

Read Joshua 24:2-16; Isaiah 58:6-14.

BACKGROUND:

A MAN on his way to a wedding, in his Sunday best, with his wife and children in the flivver behind him, comes in the semi-darkness to a point where the road divides. Which way? How can he tell? He dimly perceives a post, with a sign on top, too high up to be read. He jumps at the conclusion that this will guide him. He struggles to the top, lights carefully his last match, and reads the sign,—“Fresh Paint.” He drops to the ground and in a loud tone of voice blames everybody and everything,—seen and unseen. Why? It was proper to put the post there; it was proper to paint it. He was himself premature. The fault was his. A young man goes to college intending to be a minister. He asks an unwise professor, who dissuades him, and suggests engineering as better; but the young man has qualifications for the first, and not the second. Thus the best of professions loses a useful man, and the other gains a weak one. Why? Both the professor and the boy were rightfully there. The truth is that the boy assumed too much; the professor happened to be not wise but otherwise. Many a good choice is diverted because the post carries a misleading sign. Professors have so much influence that it is a sad thing when one is unwise; it is mischievous when he is irreligious; it is injurious when he is merely cold. But the point of our topic is more general. The loss by error in choosing is always serious;

and often final; and sometimes fatal. It is only in a few cases that the straight road breaks off in two directions sharply. Frequently one is far on the wrong road before he realizes that he has diverged; but the crisis is no less serious. Many a person is today in a profession for which he is not adapted;—a round peg in a square hole, and this though he thought his divergence slight and temporary. There is usually no remedy. The only preventative, from a worldly point of view, is in a more careful review before action; and a more careful selection of an adviser. But a worldly point of view does not satisfy the christian, for he knows of a better method. It is a confident belief in God, as being wise, patient, kind, powerful and eager to help. The description of the God of the bible, as found in the Westminster Catechism, confirms all these qualities. Do you believe it? If there is then accessible to the christian such a fountain of helpfulness, why not use it when choices are to be made? The scriptures are full of such assurances and such invitations; and those who doubt it are invited to try it and see.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. The business of an expert lawyer, doctor or engineer is to advise people who need help which is beyond their own attainments. In a crisis we hasten to them for help.
2. This seems natural enough, and we are all aware at times that the wisest are none too good in an emergency. A citizen of Chicago brought a great surgeon from Vienna to restore his child.
3. In every branch of knowledge we are sometimes brought face to face with our own inadequacy, and look around for one who knows, to give us guidance.
4. But in some of our times of deepest anxiety we are sadly conscious that we do not know which way to turn. A choice is

forced upon us, and we wring our hands ineffectually. What can we do?

5. If there is a God of infinite knowledge, and infinite kindness, why not ask him?
6. If we had a human friend with the capacity to help we should not hesitate. Are we afraid of God, or are we doubtful about him?
7. We probably have some intellectual convictions, but not enough. We have had some convincing experiences, but when they are past we think perhaps they came by accident.
8. Here is a field for faith. How slow it grows, and how weak it is.
9. Perhaps it is because we cannot see God face to face. He is a spirit, and invisible. Then why not take the word of his Son, who said, "He who has seen me has seen the Father."
10. The personal life of Jesus on the earth is proved as convincingly as that of Caesar or Bonaparte. Yet we quote and approve the words of these. Why not his?
11. But God makes allowances even for this weakness. He invites us to try him. "Come and see."
12. All through the Old Testament and the New are invitations to test him; and many have done so, and found him always ready and always sufficient.
13. When therefore we are again called upon to choose, and are hesitating and doubtful, let us go for guidance to him who knows perfectly, and always responds.

LESSON LXXIX

THE COMPLETE MAN

Read Psalm 37

BACKGROUND:

A PERFECT man is an ideal which we are conscious cannot be attained. A *complete* man is one not perfect, but having all his faculties symmetrically developed, and reaching a high level in all respects. A *normal* man is one who attains, in body, mind and spirit, the high average of civilized and cultivated manhood, but may be greatly limited in some phases. Man as a being has faculties which arrange themselves according to their nature in one or another of four classes, viz.:—Physical (the body); mental (the mind); spiritual (the soul); and impelling (the will). These are easily understood. They are my own descriptions and definitions, and will answer my present purpose, even if they can be improved. I suppose Adam approached nearest to perfection, which was, I believe, merely an ideal to him also. He was conscious of serious lacks in himself, but—fresh from the hand of God—he was substantially perfect in the first three of our human attributes, though lamentably weak in the fourth. The first is the mechanism, (corresponding to the engine), and in this, judging more or less by Milton's description, Adam was an example and illustration for the race. The second the mind is the executive faculty, (corresponding to the engineer); the third (the soul) furnishes direction and objective, and signifies compass and chart; and the fourth (the will) is the propelling force. If

God put into the possession of man all these tools and faculties for his use is it not remarkable that men, as a class, should so wholly neglect one or more? Pope, the poet, was a man of good intellect, but had a dwarfed and very imperfect body,—perhaps because he or his ancestors gave it little attention. Goliath carried his armor and weapons jauntily, but would probably have made a poor appearance as high priest. Byron had a highly developed poetical gift, but no conscience. The Puritan was a distinguished observer of the first table of the law, but gave little attention to the second, at least as interpreted by the parable of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son.

A man with *all* his faculties highly developed would be so rare that he would be a likely exhibit for a museum. Why? It may be said that this is not peculiar to man. There are few birds more beautiful than the bluebird, and few so stately as the peacock, but neither can sing acceptably. Of course the difference is that their original gifts are so limited, but man's are not. Why should not a good man be also agreeable; and why should so many friendly and acceptable men be so prone to err in matters of religion and of judgment? Why should so many wise and scholarly men have inadequate bodies? Evidently,—aside from exceptional reasons,—they are living lives which are easy but restricted,—ruts. May not God justly say to any man,—“I gave you many powers and gifts which I gave no other creature. What have you done with them? Why have you not adequately used them?

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. Man's extraordinary faculties may cooperate, but I am sure they need not conflict.

2. Man is supplied with tools adapted for many varied uses. Aside from the brevity of time, and the prolonged concentration required to excel, there is no reason why he should not keep them all sharp and ready for use.
3. Most men are capable of success in many lines, if training begins in time. Only a few, having normal minds, have natural predilections which cannot be ignored. It is not a mere slogan that every rope should pull. If it is practicable is it not obligatory?
4. Some persons are born with sluggish minds, and some seriously lack the power of apprehension. These must be excluded in generalizations.
5. Others vary greatly in readiness and promptness of response; but the moral duties of humanity are equally obligatory, though practicable results may differ.
6. These differing capacities and varying gifts are taken into account in the parable of the talents, and similar teachings of Christ, and responsibilities of course conform,—but *only in degree*, and not in obligation.
7. Why then should not Christians learn more effectually the opportunity and duty to grow in *all* faculties? Is not this an inescapable duty?
8. Abraham, Moses, David, Daniel, Isaiah,—are they not examples of this four-sided cultivation? They were specially led, to be sure, but if our religion is sound may not any man who is willing be also specially led,—even though his field of attainment and accomplishment be restricted?—and is not the duty the same?
9. If the world, as a whole, ever comes to be wholly a godly or godlike world, will it not be such not only in reverence and worship but also in the last and finest development of manhood, as God meant it when he conferred on the race his varied gifts and also his varied opportunities?

LESSON LXXX

OVERTONES

*Read Ruth 1:14-17;
I. Chronicles 11:17-19*

BACKGROUND:

I PASSED by once where a man was tuning a piano. He was pounding the same chord again and again, and I asked him why. He said he was listening for the overtones. I asked what those were, and he said, "Listen while I strike the chord,—not to the stroke of the hammer on the wire, but to the waves of sound over and around it," and I listened and heard. He said,— "These are what make the piano musical." And this is the reason the piano, when reproduced on the victrola, is only a rhythmical tinkle. The overtones make no impression on the wax master-record, and are not reproduced. Analogous also are the shadowy colors in the atmosphere. I stood on my lawn with an artist. Looking a distance off he said, "The lavender in the atmosphere is beautiful." I said, "There is none; it is mostly gray." He answered,— "Look again; over there, where the color comes up over yon roof." And I looked again and saw, and it *was* lavender, and I have often seen it since. Such are the beautiful things in Nature, which the trained ear can learn to hear, and the trained eye learn to see, but which are altogether lost to the inattentive. Such also are higher phases of life,—friendship, the graces of the spirit, and the delights of living, which only the higher sensibilities can apprehend. They are the overtones, which make life musical and colorful,

but which you will lose if you are only turning up the soil with your muckrake, or are only chopping trees for lumber. Man is a citizen of two worlds, and has qualities adapting him to both. His physical nature was adapted,—oh, so amply adapted,—to the world, when he was first introduced into it,—the wonderful world which had been prepared for him; and the world itself was adapted,—oh, so amply adapted,—to him. But God bestowed on him also qualities of a higher and finer grade, which the beauties and utilities of the physical stimulate but cannot satisfy. The record is that God “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, *and he became a living soul.*” So there hangs about man an aura which is superhuman, and he has means of communication and association not reached by the physical senses. Thomas Moore sings: “You may break, you may shatter the vase if you will; but the scent of the roses will cling round it still.” This might have been deemed visionary and mystical not so very long ago,—but not now, since the radio has served to indicate,—faintly as yet,—how full the world is of harmonies, visions, and other things adapted to satisfy the needs of the soul,—not tangible but assuredly real. We call them “things” because we can think about them and recognize them, though we cannot lay our hands on them, or see them with our eyes.

This I think is the constant teaching of scripture, and also of experience. This is the reason the true artist sees and hears in music and art what the dullard misses altogether. Said a lady to the artist Turner,—“I can’t see in nature the colors you put on your canvas.” “Don’t you wish you could, madam?” said he. So the cultivated christian sees dimly what God alone sees

clearly, the values in humankind as it might be, though dull and unmusical he may appear to those whose senses and sensibilities are only physical.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. Every mind, open at all to the play of world forces, has times of exaltation; even periods almost of ecstasy; but like the winds, while he feels their soft presence he "can not tell whence they come, or whither they go."
2. Every one has periods of high resolve, waves of aspiration, convictions of duty, desires for disinterested friends, remorse and regret for shortcomings, outreaching for God.
3. At those times we are not only eager for the higher things for ourselves, but appreciative of the like qualities in others.
4. These are the times when men, like the disciples on the mount of transfiguration, would like to build tabernacles and stay in that high atmosphere, and with that high companionship.
5. These are the overtones, which we only hear by carefully attending, and which, if we miss them, will leave us poor indeed.
6. This is no mere sentiment, nor is it in the least imaginary. It is with many, in some phases, a daily experience, and quite within the reach of any of us who greatly desire it.
7. These experiences lead us, or ought logically to lead us, to see the beautiful things of which mankind is capable, to look for them, but to wait patiently while less desirable qualities hold sway.
8. The radio teaches us that the atmosphere is humming with delightful and uplifting things which we may get by merely tuning in.
9. The Pilgrim's Progress, though its incidents range almost wholly in these higher fields of experience, is just as true as the wooden recital of Henry G. Wells in his Story of Human History, and is much more like life as it is lived.

10. While therefore, in the common bread and butter functions of life, we pound away at the wires, and weary ourselves with their dull thud, let us listen for the overtones, and live, at least a practicable part of our time, in bliss.

LESSON LXXXI

THE DIVINE GIFT OF MUSIC

Read Psalm 38

BACKGROUND:

THE technical origin of music is not within the sphere of the bible class. We need rather to think of its uses and benefits as a gift of God. We cannot help reviewing however those aspects which convince us more and more that man, as he is, is not of animal origin. The pulsations of the atmosphere by which we apprehend the significance and the delights of music were always available to every creature; and the vocal chords and combinations by which its varying tones are produced are part of the animal structure, but no mere animal ever sang, and we see no indications that any ever will. Even the birds, with all their lovely tones, have a limited scope, beyond which they cannot go; and their physical limitations are observed in their repeated cycle of notes. Man alone sings "with spirit and understanding."

My mother usually sang at her work,—not strongly but quietly, as to herself. The home was that of a country minister, with five children. With the parents this made the family seven,—the biblical number of perfection. The children, to be sure, were not perfect, but if the parents were not the children didn't know it, and my impression that they were, derived from the home atmosphere, is more convincing to me than an argument.

My mother's singing was very sweet and melodious to me. She sang, always, I think, the quieter and more

musical of the church hymns. Those I remember best were, "How tedious and tasteless the hours, when Jesus no longer I see," "Must Jesus bear the cross alone," "Just as I am." The earliest I remember is the familiar child song,—"I think when I read that sweet story of old."

Since humanity first appeared there has never been a time when song was not the impulse of a full heart; and we can trace the habit of music as far back as Jubal, who "was the father of all them that handle the harp and the organ." This also was one of the good gifts of God to humanity, for with animals or mechanical apparatus, song of any kind has never been the expression of joy, or grief, or pleading, or thanksgiving. Among the Israelites, and doubtless the other great peoples of the ancient world, every army had its choirs of singers, its bands of trumpeters, its harpers,—"harping with their harps." Ezra brought up with him from Babylon to Jerusalem "the singers, the children of Asaph, a hundred and twenty eight," and when he organized the congregation he had a choir of "two hundred singing men and singing women." The record of the constant use of music flows on so naturally and easily that one cannot be surprised that Jesus, at his coming, was escorted by the noble choirs of heaven, whose chanted message of peace and good will vibrates yet in the hearts of mankind. Nor is it surprising that in his picture of the New Jerusalem John makes such frequent use of songs, sung in the mass, rolling superbly up and down the green mountains and hills of paradise, and embodying surpassing hymns of thanksgiving and praise.

The music of praise,—indeed *all music*,—is from the heart. Much singing is merely wooden, because it does

not express feeling. It is probably because this is generally recognized that the artificial *tremolo*, now so common, is devised, perhaps to give the appearance of feeling where none exists, so that a harsh and unmelodious voice may appear to be sympathetic. It is not uncommon to hear a voice without any natural sweetness, or worn and hardened in the music halls, sing the old familiar hymns in tremulous tones, intended to indicate feeling, and using the tremolo to produce that effect. But this is artificial, and even if skilful is not impressive, for true singing is a combination of heart and voice. A melody, ever so sweet, is only half charming unless to the hearer it is married to a kindred sentiment, so that though memory may not recall the words, their meaning stirs in the soul, and both float on together.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. There are supposed to be a billion and a half of human beings in the world now; and many more have come and gone since God made man in his own image.
2. All have or have had the mechanical facilities for song. All could talk, and make themselves understood. I wonder how many could sing.
3. Including in singing the chant, and other rhythmical voice movements, it seems plain that this faculty does not only accompany civilization. Savages and races low in rank of development sing, within that definition, and many find in it a deep satisfaction.
4. It is not of the high art of music that we are here concerned, according to any special test, but only the deep appeal which it makes to the human emotions.
5. It is true however that the higher human beings rise in the scale of civilization the deeper and more profound a part do the varied emotions take in the tones produced by the voice.
6. In its better sense music,—mere melody,—cooperates with thought and its expression. Even music composed for instru-

mental production, and thus without words, has its meaning, capable of expression.

7. Every composer can not only entitle his composition, as to its general theme, but he can tell you the significance of each phrase, and music not adapted to move the emotions would be of a very low order.
8. Skill in the production of music, as thus defined, is conferred in varying degrees, and sensitiveness to its melody or meaning is not the gift of all alike.
9. Neither is taste in music alike in its development in all. The accepted theory holds that music is both a science and an art, and that adequate cultivation will lead on to such an apprehension that the best would be selected by common choice.
10. It is not surprising then that God's people,—made in his image, and greatly aspiring to approach again that likeness, should find one of their finest earthly joys, and one of their richest anticipations, in singing and making melody in their hearts, as well as with their voices.

LESSON LXXXII

THE MUSIC OF PARADISE

Read Luke 2:8-14

BACKGROUND:

MUSIC, like light, may be or appear to be, a single strain, as the song of a bird, or an individual voice; or it may be broken up into parts, as light is by a prism. It may be produced by a single instrument, as a violin, having a characteristic tone, or by a grand orchestra of many varied instruments. It may be a simple melody, moving hearers by pathos, or it may range over many fields to the grand crash of the military band. Men have varied tastes, and judgment and appreciation of music may be as varied as the world races, but no instrument or orchestra has ever equalled the fascination of the trained human voice, especially where it adds to its melody the inspiration or passion of rich poetry, expressing sentiment, patriotism and emotion. The magnificence of mass singing of hymns, well understood and worth while, has ever been the inspiration of the church, and while humanity lasts it can never be otherwise. When Jesus came he was accompanied by the choicest choir of the heavenly host, as one would expect of a royal procession accompanying the Prince of Heaven in his progress through space; but the words of the inaugural song which the shepherds heard were not merely pronounced by a herald, as we are accustomed to think, but sung in incomparable tones; and the chosen singers who led the van knew and meant to convey the full message of those glorious words. If this

be so, what could be more fitting; what more sublime? Doubtless the rich melodies of paradise as far surpass the best music of earth as the visible glories of paradise surpass the greatest spectacles earth can produce. The shepherds of Bethlehem were not the only fortunate auditors of that great festival. God has been good enough to give to mortals,—or at least some mortals,—to hear and apprehend greater music than they have ever been able to produce. Such are the limitations of humanity that we can only remotely compare the best music earth enjoys with that which the composers in their visions have been permitted to hear. And often the sweetest music one ever hears is sung in the silent places of a single soul, and has but one auditor. As time compared with eternity is but a “piece cut off,” may it not be equally true that the sweetest music of earth is a part of a greater chorus, which now and then is allowed to fall from paradise.

Arthur Kraft, at this writing a singer in St. Bartholomew's Church, New York, whose wondrous tenor moves and uplifts me more than the voice of any other man, sometimes sings for his friends a simple but melodious little song which affects me like a burst of the melodies of paradise. I can only recall by memory a part of the refrain:

“Don't you hear the angels singing,
Don't you hear the sweet bells ringing,
Those golden bells,—for you and me.”

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. Every emotion and passion of man has been stimulated by music, which we have apprehended and delighted in according to our education and development.

2. Perhaps the welcome the saints are to receive as they enter paradise will be not only the gracious words of the king, and the king's Son, but also the rich melodies of the angel choirs.
3. We have often been deeply impressed by melodies though the language of the song was unknown. We have known cases, as in many great operas, where the music was all the more inspiring for that reason.
4. When by the great changes which accompany the transition from earth to paradise no language is unknown, a saint, though newly arrived, may grasp the dignity and glory of the hymn, as well as the rich swell of the melody.
5. When Paul saw and heard, as he was caught up to the third heaven, so much that he could not even repeat it, we can only wonder how much of it was the magnificent singing of the great host.
6. Moses and David and Mary wrote and sang on earth songs which humanity has never and will never let die, but what of the songs they were permitted to hear when they were transported to paradise, where music is at its best?
7. The best of the world's music has never grown old, but the field for new, in language and melody, can never be exhausted.
8. Many of the jazz singers of earth can never, it would seem, be more abashed by the glory of heaven, compared with the wonders of the world, than by the revelations of the trivialities of their own best performances compared with the music of paradise.

LESSON LXXXIII

THE GLORY OF GOD

*Read Revelation 4:3, 4, 6;
10:1-21:18-23*

BACKGROUND:

THE glory of the earth is one thing; the glory of the non-physical is another. The one is adapted to bodily vision, and fails when the sun goes down. The other glows and shines for the delight of the spirit, and is expected to be brilliant beyond compare, even when the bodily senses have forever failed; and yet probably the apprehension which grasps them and revels in them is the same in both. Pure white light is generally assumed to be intended by the term, "the glory of God," and is almost uniformly represented in picturing the theme,—as in Christ's transfiguration on the mountain, or in his walking on the water, or in his rising from the tomb. But this ignores much specific as well as implied scripture. White light,—mere brilliancy,—is composite. It is broken up into manifold beautiful hues, not only by the prism but by the varying degrees of reflection even of sunlight. Much more may it be so where light is original, and shines, as in the descriptions of the new Jerusalem, like an atmosphere. Perhaps the glory radiating from the person of Christ on Mount Hermon was not white but many hued, as John saw it in his vision. Here the Son of God is depicted as wrapped in a cloud, and surrounded by a rainbow. And even in describing the great throne, and him who sat on it, John pictures it surrounded by a rainbow; and in the

vision of the city and its walls and foundations he has incorporated in his vivid description the varied glow and color of every gem. So in the Old Testament, it is shown that God did not disregard the lovely combinations of color which abounded in nature. The jeweled breastplate of the High Priest, the embroidered hangings of the holy place, and the dyed coverings of the tabernacle, prescribed in the revelation to Moses, all indicate that the varied hues of the prism were regarded as an essential part of God's glory, as well as its composite white ray. And so, in the vision which Isaiah saw, the glory of God was the "fullness of the whole earth."

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. The glory of God probably means, where the term is used, the atmosphere of beauty which surrounds God in paradise.
2. This is indicated by the fact that wherever it was seen on earth it was, as it were, the opening of a veil between earth and heaven.
3. Instances are the transfiguration of Christ; the appearance of the angels at the resurrection; the vision of the servant of Elisha; the appearance of Christ walking on the water, where the disciples thought they saw a spirit; and perhaps the appearance of Jesus when the Roman soldiers came to arrest him.
4. Human organs of vision, like the other senses, are not adapted to catch such appearances without a special equipment not pertaining to humanity.
5. So the servant of Elisha did not see the heavenly hosts which surrounded him until his "eyes were opened" in answer to Elisha's prayer.
6. Probably the shining on Moses' face after his interview with God in the mount was the remnant of a similar vision. He was obliged to wear a veil in his communications with the people.

7. If eagerness for a life in glory, as a personal possession, had been deemed a highly important and prevailing motive for a godly life on earth, there would probably have been more frequent and specific revelations of that character.
8. The scriptures make much of the glory of God, but very little of the human aspiration for like glory.
9. As in the case of the transfiguration, the purpose seems to be chiefly to establish certainly the divine character of the Lord, and make his authority more definite and final.
10. Men have many duties and responsibilities on earth, and for these the conviction of God's guidance and power are more important than the prospect of personal glory, which must, in the nature of things, be deferred.
11. The assurance of future glory is like Christian's distant view of the Holy City from the Delectable Hills,—it is an encouragement and assurance, but there may be a long, hard journey still ahead.

LESSON LXXXIV

TIME—HOW MUCH, AND HOW USED

Read—

BACKGROUND:

NORMALLY it is assumed that life ought to be three score years and ten;—perhaps, by reason of strength, more; and in his usual computations a man supposes he may expect so much; but even if he does, yet the part available for his own choices is much less. A fourth, or perhaps a third, lies within the period of preparation, at the beginning of life, in which but little serious work or labour with a purpose is entered on. Another fourth, or perhaps a third, lies within the period of slow decline, at the end of life, in which effort is increasingly difficult, and the life rests most on the past, and hopes but little for any future advance. This leaves approximately half of an individual life for real endeavor and accomplishment. Even this is subject to prior and second mortgages, which exhaust the most of it. One-third is imperatively required by nature for daily recuperation. An old slogan recurs to me, once much used in advertising a certain mattress;—"One-third of your life is spent in bed." Nothing can reduce that. It is a prior demand. Then periodically every day, usually three times, in some countries four, and sometimes five, the body demands nourishment, and will not be satisfied without it. This, with its attendant preparation and conclusion, requires some three hours. Another eight, for the active business man another third of the day,—frequently more, is spent absorbedly

in his vocation; and for many of us the trip to it and back again, another hour, and sometimes two. Thus normally there remains,—for every social use, including entertainments, exercising, reading, reflecting, visiting, etc.,—only three or four hours of the day, and into these must be concentrated every important thing for which life exists. All the rest only lead up to, or prepare for, or make this possible. The exceptions to this general rule are rare. If only five percent of us pay an income tax it may be inferred that for most of us time affords no greater opportunities; one-sixth of one-half of life; and what we omit, or neglect, of real accomplishment day by day, as life proceeds, has little prospect of recovery. And yet our joys and pleasures are abundant, and may be very satisfying, but it is startling to realize how much they must be condensed. If we will, most of us may have, in addition, the unpledged portion of a day out of every seven, specially designed for the culture of the spirit, and the nourishment of the higher life. If this condition, on the whole, looks normal, and is to be expected, so that it must be assumed, the remedy is not, as I believe, to complain, or to decline to consider it, but to thank God that enough vacant time remains to create an atmosphere, and cultivate a spirit, and pile up a supply of material good to think about, sufficient to colour and ornament and make musical even the time occupied in the prior demands on our activity. Many a woman sings at her work, and many a man, deep in the occupations of business, smiles to himself as his passing thoughts recall home and children and friends; and this is one of the advantages of reading, and of music and of art, that it colors a man's sky, and sings in his memory, and warms his

heart, without stopping or even slowing up his busy hand and brain. Thank God then for the many facets of the human faculties. It is said that Julius Caesar could write two letters at once; one may have been a vital decision of a public question, and the other a message of love and confidence to his wife Calphurnia. These, and such as these, are among the compensations of life, which keep it in balance, and prevent fretting and needless anxiety.

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. It does not require much time to store up happy thoughts; a little time may serve as well for this as a little income, or a little home. The least measure of such things,—even life,—is in their *quality* and not their *quantity*.
2. “A little farm well-tilled; a little house well-filled”; these have been the satisfactions of thoughtful men and women ever since the world began.
3. Ruth had more satisfying joys than Jezebel; and, by another comparison, David the shepherd had greater joys than David the king, weeping for his rebel son Absalom.
4. Time,—“leisure time,”—is a species of income, and a little, well used, is often better than much.
5. If God made a mistake in requiring a third of every day to “knit up the ravelled sleeve of care,” as the poet phrases it, then he may have been wrong also in so limiting life itself.
6. Don’t you think Methuselah got very weary of his nine hundred and sixty-nine years? Would you like to be condemned to live so long?
7. This is illustrated by the familiar jest about the head of the household, when questioned whether the married man lived longer than the single one, answered,—“well it *seems* longer.”
8. Though it be short, in total length, or though tasks and duties seem to occupy an undue portion, yet I am sure you will agree with me that enough remains for every need, if only it be wisely used.

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9. There are some who deem life lived suitably only when lived solemnly, and with the eye fixed on the end; but the scriptures do not so teach. A serious purpose may be adorned and decorated all over, like the worm fence around the old cow pasture at childhood's home.

LESSON LXXXV

AMEN AND AMEN

Read Psalms 41:13; 72:19; 85:52

BACKGROUND:

EVERYTHING, excepting only Deity, and things pertaining to Deity, has a beginning and an end. Time is, in Greek, “a piece cut off,” and implies by its name that it begins and also ends. The circle is a symbol of eternity, because it lacks both. Life began somewhere, sometime, somehow. Men deeming themselves scientific assume that there must be an explanation of it without the action of any extraneous force, but have never yet even suggested any other origin for it which is tenable, even to them. Evolutionists begin human history with a cell of protoplasm, but none can explain where the active quality of the cell, which we call life, had its origin. We need not discuss this theory in the class, but nothing controverts our proposition that everything,—excepting only God,—had a beginning and an end. Outside this range, in either direction, we have no knowledge at all, except by divine revelation. God says of himself that he is Alpha and Omega, the first letter of the alphabet and the last. Every book of history or biography, sacred or secular, pieces together the lives and activities of human beings. The biblical story reads,—as an eminent minister said,—like the graves and inscriptions in a cemetery. “Here lies——; he began——; and ended——.” “He was gathered to his fathers”; and in Kings and Chronicles it is added,—“and——reigned in his stead.” Every

chapter in the bible assumes this, and has a bearing—direct or indirect—on the query which rises in every mind,—where did he go; where is he now; if he did not take his spirit with him to the place of burial where and how does it exist; can the mode of existence be anticipated: can it be prepared for? It is remarkable that nearly every book of the New Testament ends with its Amen, and nearly all are accompanied with a prayer in effect that God would make it clear. The last book ends with this solemn ejaculation. Its critical meaning is important in other respects, but to me the impression is like the swinging of the pendulum in Poe's old clock,—“Forever, never;—never, forever.”

LESSON ANALYSIS

1. Paul winds up his letters with this word, Amen, which reads there like turning the key in the door; like the striking of the years of one deceased on the old church bell, which closes as it were suddenly,—“It is over; I can do no more.”
2. When it is doubled, as in the Forty-first Psalm, it seems to greatly enhance the significance of the closing sentence.
3. When Jesus used the same words,—(in Greek, translated “verily”),—it imported a double meaning and responsibility.
4. It is not merely an added emphasis,—it is more in the nature of a climax, as if the message attained its maximum, and boomed its “finis.”
5. We have mottos, framed by wise men who have long ago apprehended their frailty, which concentrate and condense in few words the immensity of the thought that there is an end, as well as a beginning:—“Tempus fugit,” “Carpe diem,” and the like.
6. Carlyle said,—“One life—a little gleam of time between two eternities.”
7. Happily this thought, while solemn, is not deadening. It is a warning, but not a condemnation.

8. When life's end is anticipated and prepared for the moments are all the happier, and the desire to prolong them is a part of the joy of living. One who waits and looks constantly for the end is ill or morbid.
9. A light heart is altogether in harmony with busy hands and an active mind. The world is all the more attractive because it is temporary.
10. But nothing could be more deadening to the pleasure of living than the consciousness of a sentence to stay in it forever.
11. Life in the world has an end,—thank God,—for a better one is to come.

LESSON LXXXVI

TESTIMONIALS OF EMINENT MEN TO RELIGION

MOST lives are quiet, and without many thrills or exciting adventures. The sense of duty is a controlling factor with some, and mere habit with others. Yet many lives seem to observers deadly dull and prosaic, while the individual himself is conscious of many a profound thrill. So only a few lives would furnish material for an interesting biography. But the quiet life is often a life of faith, though this be but seldom mentioned; and the steady faith which a life seems to follow in patience is often in fact maintained only by constant effort and prayer. God knows the lives of his uncomplaining saints, and holds them with his hand.

Here and there, in some emergency, or it may be only at a high point where life is reviewed, we find ourselves revived and strengthened in our own struggle with doubt or adversity by an unexpected look into a profound experience of a life we supposed to have no great height or depth, and from that glance we have learned that under that quiet surface there was a burning and ardent faith in God, or a serene confidence in the power of the almighty arm, or an eager desire for divine guidance.

Such has been our inspiration and encouragement when first we read the story of the missionary zeal of Livingston, the steady confidence of Gladstone, the glowing faith of General Gordon, or the assurance and conviction of Stonewall Jackson.

It ought then to aid in building up the faith of weak or doubting christians to gather up the testimonies of a few outstanding men of high character and great position, when circumstances called for a confession of their deep dependence on God, and their trust in his love and power.

Here then are a few:

WASHINGTON—*On Resigning his Commission*

“I consider it an indispensable duty to close this last act of my official life by commanding the interests of our dearest country to the protection of Almighty God, and those who have the protection of them to his holy keeping.”

And on his Farewell to the Army

“Being about to conclude these his last public orders, and to take his leave in a short time of the military character, and to bid a final adieu to the armies he has so long had the honor to command, he (the general-in-chief) can only again offer in their behalf his recommendations to this grateful country, and his prayers to the God of Armies. May ample justice be done them here, and may the choicest of Heaven’s favors, both here and hereafter, attend those who, under the Divine auspices, have secured innumerable blessings for others.”

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN—*Address to the Constitutional Convention*

“In the beginning of the contest with Great Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayer in this room for the divine protection. Our prayers, sir,

were heard; and they were graciously answered;—and have we now forgotten that powerful friend, or do we imagine that we no longer need his assistance. I have lived sir a long time; and the longer I live the more convincing proof I see of this truth,—that God governs in the affairs of men, and if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid?”

JOHN ADAMS—*Inaugural Address as President*

“And may that Being who is supreme over all, the patron of order, the foundation of justice, and the protector in all ages of the world of virtuous liberty, continue his blessing upon this nation and its government, and give it all possible success and duration consistent with the ends of his providence.”

ABRAHAM LINCOLN—*Farewell to Springfield,
February of 1860*

“I go to assume a task more difficult than that which devolved on General Washington. Unless the Great God who assisted him shall be with me and aid me I must fail. But if the same omniscient mind and the same almighty arm that directed and protected him shall guide and support me I shall not fail; I shall succeed. Let us all pray that the God of our fathers may not forsake us now.”

ROBERT E. LEE—*Conversation*

“I can only say that I am nothing but a poor sinner, trusting in Christ for salvation, and need all the prayers they can offer for me.”

*And from an Order for a day of fasting after
Gettysburg*

“God is our only refuge and strength. Let us humble ourselves before him. Let us confess our many sins, and beseech him to give us a higher courage, a purer patriotism and more determined will, and that he will hasten the time when war, with its horrors and sufferings, shall cease, and that he will give us a name and place among the nations of the earth.”

WILLIAM MCKINLEY—*Written and signed by him,
and copied in his letterbook*

“My belief embraces the divinity of Christ, and a recognition of christianity as the mightiest factor in the world’s civilization.”

And on his deathbed he said:

“It is God’s way. His will, not ours, be done.”

And his last low words were:

“Nearer my God to thee,
 Nearer to thee,
E’en though it be a cross”—

And he added:

“That has been my inextinguishable prayer.”

WOODROW WILSON—*Address on Stonewall Jackson*

“I do not understand how any man can approach the discharge of the duties of life without faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Address at Trenton, a few days before he became President

Of the bible he said: “It is the one supreme source of revelation, the revelation of the meaning of life, the

nature of God and the spiritual nature and needs of men. It is the only guide of life which really leads the spirit in the way of peace and salvation. If men could but be made to know it intimately, and for what it really is, we should have secured both individual and social regeneration."

CHAUNCEY DEPEW

"From my experience of ninety-three years I am more firmly anchored to the bible than ever before, and believe implicitly in its teachings and in the God it portrays. I have always felt a real dependency on God. My idea of God is personal; not a personality such as we are, of course, but glorified, divine and infinite heart, brain and spirit, all-comprehending, all-powerful, never-failing. I think of God as being interested in mortals and mortal affairs, Christ as his earthly manifestation; Christ, who understood, lived, toiled, and suffered upon earth as men and women do; Christ, who died, as we must do before we live again. Christ is God's pledge of love.

"A thing I have never lost is faith in the efficacy of prayer. I have tested it repeatedly. It has never failed."

PREMIER BALDWIN

"If I did not feel that our work, and the work of all others who hold the same faith and ideals, whether in politics or civic work, was done in the faith and hope that some day—maybe a million years hence—the kingdom of God would spread over the whole world, then I should have no hope, I could do no work, and I would give over my office to anyone who would take it.

"The bible," he continued, "is not only the greatest literature in the world, but, above that, it always has been and is in the nature of a high explosive in the world."

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